Effective language use in academic study material for L2 speakers of English at a distance learning institution

Malvin Patrick Vergie

Thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Philosophy in Intercultural Communication

Department of General Linguistics

Stellenbosch University

Supervisor: Dr Simone Conradie

March 2010

Declaration

By submitting this thesis electronically, I declare that the entirety of the work contained therein is my own, original work, that I am the owner of the copyright thereof (unless to the extent explicitly otherwise stated) and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it for obtaining any qualification.

Malvin Vergie
November 2009

Abstract

The gap which exists between the academic culture represented by lecturers and the non-academic-culture represented by students at a residential university is even greater at a distance learning institution (DLI). At a DLI, lecturers and students are faced with a number of challenges. Firstly, the majority of distance learning students are older than the average residential student and have added responsibilities related to their families and jobs. Secondly, they come from a wider variety of cultural, educational and socio-economic backgrounds than residential first-years. Finally, the majority of these students have a relatively low proficiency in their second language (L2) English, which is usually their third or fourth language rather than their second language, and which is the language of instruction at South African DLIs. At a DLI, there is little or no face-to-face contact between lecturers and students, and teaching takes place primarily by means of printed study material, specifically study guides. Study guides substitute for the lectures and other contact periods that residential students receive. In addition, study guides have to facilitate the student in the world of a new and sometimes intimidating culture, namely the (tertiary) academic culture. However, many students may have trouble understanding the type of language used in study material (essentially, academic language), sometimes because lecturers do not understand the challenges faced by DLI students and/or because they write in a formal, academic style, which is often not easily accessible to first-year students. This could pose a barrier for learning, as well as for the transition of the student from the non-academic culture to the academic culture. The aim of the study reported in this thesis was to identify the linguistic criteria which a successful study guide for L2 speakers of English should adhere to. These criteria were extracted from literature on effective writing/teaching in general, then discussed in terms of their relevance for the specific purpose of writing effective study guides, and finally applied to critically evaluate the language used in three DLI study guides. The thesis ends with some concluding remarks, a discussion of the implications of the findings of the research, and some recommendations for further research.

Opsomming

Die gaping tussen die akademiese kultuur wat verteenwoordig word deur dosente en die nie-akademiese kultuur wat verteenwoordig word deur studente by 'n residensiële universiteit is selfs groter by 'n afstandsonderriginstelling (AOI). By 'n AOI kom studente en dosente voor 'n aantal uitdagings te staan. Eerstens is die oorgrote meerderheid afstandsonderrigstudente ouer as die gemiddelde student aan 'n residensiële universiteit en het hulle bykomende verantwoordelikhede met betrekking tot hul gesinne en werkplekke. Tweedens kom hulle uit 'n wyer verskeidenheid van kulturele, opvoedkundige en sosio-ekonomiese agtergronde as eerstejaarstudente van residensiële universiteite. Ten laaste is die meerderheid van hierdie studente se taalvaardigheid in hulle tweedetaal (T2) Engels relatief laag. In die meeste gevalle is Engels hulle derde of vierde taal eerder as hul tweede taal, terwyl dit ook die taal van onderrig is by Suid-Afrikaanse AOIs. By 'n AOI is daar geen of min persoonlike kontak tussen dosente en studente, en onderrig vind meestal plaas deur middel van gedrukte studiemateriaal, veral studiegidse. Studiegidse dien as plaasvervanger vir die voorlesings en ander kontaksessies wat 'n student by 'n residensiële universiteit ontvang. Ook moet studiegidse die student voorthelp in die wêreld van die nuwe en soms intimiderende kultuur, die (tersiêre) akademiese kultuur. Tog sukkel baie studente om die tipe taal (akademiese taal) wat in die studiemateriaal gebruik word te verstaan, wat soms veroorsaak word deur dosente wat nie 'n goeie begrip het van die uitdagings wat AOI-studente in die gesig moet staar nie, en/of omdat hulle in 'n formele, akademiese styl skryf wat nie maklik toeganklik vir eerstejaarstudente is nie. Dit kan 'n struikelblok vir leer wees, sowel as vir die oorgang van die student vanaf die nie-akademiese kultuur na die akademiese kultuur. Die doel van die studie waaroor daar verslag gelewer word in hierdie tesis was om die linguistiese kriteria te identifiseer waaraan 'n suksesvolle studiegids vir T2 sprekers van Engels moet voldoen. Hierdie kriteria is afgelei uit die literatuur oor effektiewe skryf/onderrig oor die algemeen, en vervolgens bespreek in terme van hulle relevansie vir die spesifieke doel van die skryf van effektiewe studiegidse. Laastens is hierdie kriteria gebruik om die taalgebruik in drie AOI-studiegidse krities te evalueer. Die tesis word afgesluit met enkele slotopmerkings, 'n bespreking van die implikasies van die bevindinge van die navorsing, en enkele aanbevelings vir verdere navorsing.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank God – for His grace and blessings; Dr Simone Conradie – for her enthusiasm, encouragement, wonderful support and academic insight; my wife, Joylinda, and children, Malinda and Caleb – for their love and understanding; my mom, Georgina – for inspiring me; John Kirkman – for his quiet encouragement.

Dedicated to the memory of the late Muriel Kirkman

Table of Content

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY 1

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE OVERVIEW: BACKGROUND ON DISTANCE LEARNING INSTITUTIONS AND ON EFFECTIVE WRITING 4

2.1 Introduction 4
2.2 The concept of 'culture' 5
2.3 The specific challenges facing lecturers and students at a DLI 9
2.4 The role of the study guide at a DLI 14
2.5 The features of effective writing and effective teaching 16
2.5.1 Appropriate use of contextualisation markers 17
2.5.2 Appropriate paragraphing 18
2.5.3 The use of metatext 21
2.5.4 Explicitness 22
2.5.5 Cohesion and coherence 24
2.5.6 Guiding inferencing 25
2.5.7 Interpersonal style 26
2.5.8 Simplicity 28
2.6 Conclusion 29

CHAPTER 3: A CRITICAL EVALUATION OF THREE STUDY GUIDES 31

3.1 Introduction 31
3.2 Linguistic criteria for effective study guides 32
3.2.1 Appropriate use of contextualisation markers 32
3.2.2 Appropriate paragraphing 33
3.2.3 The use of metatext 34
3.2.4 Explicitness 35
3.2.5 Cohesion and coherence 36

3.2.6 Guiding inferencing 37
3.2.7 Interpersonal style 37
3.2.8 Simplicity 40
3.3 Critical evaluation of study guides 42
3.3.1 Study guide 1 42
3.3.1.1 Appropriate use of contextualisation markers 42
3.3.1.2 Appropriate paragraphing 44
3.3.1.3 The use of metatext 45
3.3.1.4 Explicitness 46
3.3.1.5 Cohesion and coherence 46
3.3.1.6 Guiding inferencing 48
3.3.1.7 Interpersonal style 49
3.3.1.8 Simplicity 51
3.3.2 Study guide 2 51
3.3.2.1 Appropriate use of contextualisation markers 52
3.3.2.2 Appropriate paragraphing 52
3.3.2.3 The use of metatext 53
3.3.2.4 Explicitness 54
3.3.2.5 Cohesion and coherence 54
3.3.2.6 Guiding inferencing 55
3.3.2.7 Interpersonal style 57
3.3.2.8 Simplicity 58
3.3.3 Study guide 3 59
3.3.3.1 Appropriate use of contextualisation markers 59
3.3.3.2 Appropriate paragraphing 60
3.3.3.3 The use of metatext 60
3.3.3.4 Explicitness 61
3.3.3.5 Cohesion and coherence 61
3.3.3.6 Guiding inferencing 62
3.3.3.7 Interpersonal style 63
3.3.3.8 Simplicity 66
3.4 Conclusion 66

CHAPTER 4: CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS 70

4.1 Concluding remarks 70
4.2 Implications of research findings 71
4.3 Further research 74

REFERENCES 76

CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Lecturers at a university, who embody the academic culture, are expected and often trained to communicate about their field of expertise in a highly academic, formal style when, for example, presenting a paper at an academic conference or writing a paper for an academic journal. This is unproblematic when the writer and the reader are both familiar with the academic culture. Although the conception of 'academic culture' might not be the stereotypical one, it should be clear from this chapter what the terms "academic culture" and "non-academic culture" refer to and how these terms are used in this thesis.

However, lecturers are also expected to communicate about their field of expertise with people who are not (yet) members of the academic culture, namely, when teaching (especially first-year) students. At a distance learning institution (DLI), there is little or no face-to-face contact between lecturers and students, and teaching takes place primarily by means of printed study material, specifically study guides. Study guides have to fulfil a number of functions. Firstly, study guides have to convey to the DLI student the information that a residential student (i.e., a student attending a residential university as opposed to a DLI) would receive in the form of a textbook and lecture notes. Secondly, study guides have to serve as contact between the lecturer and student because they also substitute for the lectures and other contact periods that residential students receive. Finally, study guides have to facilitate the student in the world of a new and sometimes intimidating culture, namely the academic culture. This means that the study guide plays a central role at the DLI.

Furthermore, the profile of the average DLI student differs from that of the average residential student in terms of age, socio-economic background, school education and English language proficiency. For example, the average South African DLI student (i) is older than the average residential student; (ii) did not achieve matriculation exemption and can only access the university around the age of 23; (iii) has a full-time job and a family (usually including some dependents); (iv) does not have a high level of proficiency in English (the medium of instruction at the DLI under discussion in this thesis); and (v) does not have access to technology (e.g. a computer and the internet) and, as a consequence, has to rely on the study guide and other written study material which is mailed to him/her (Subotzky 2008; Mehrotra, Hollister and McGahey 2001: 8, 53). The average South African DLI student

therefore faces more challenges than the average residential student (Mehrotra et al. 2001: 139, 141). It is also worth noting that the DLI referred to in this thesis is currently increasing access for students by providing easier access; for example, allowing students to access a degree course indirectly by first enrolling for a certificate or diploma course. On the basis of the differences between DLI students and residential students, it is safe to conclude that the "gap" that exists between the academic culture (represented by writing conventions agreed on by academics, researchers, lecturers, writers of study guides) and the non-academic culture (represented by general reading, writing, learning conventions not shaped by those operating within the academic culture, i.e. by students) in general is even larger at a DLI.

For most DLI students at a South African university, the study guide and tutorial letters may be the only means of "communicating" with the lecturer. However, many students may have trouble understanding the type of language used in study material (essentially, academic language), sometimes because lecturers may not have an understanding of the challenges faced by DLI students and/or because they are used to writing in a formal, academic style, which is often not easily accessible to first-year students. This could pose a barrier for learning, as well as for the transition of the student from the non-academic culture to the academic culture. Thus, lecturers who write study guides have to attempt to use language in a way that will introduce the student to the academic culture in a friendly, non-intimidating way, and that will be effective in conveying the information that the lecturer wishes to convey.

In view of the problem stated in the previous paragraph, the research question addressed by the study conducted for this thesis could be formulated as follows: What are the linguistic criteria for a successful study guide for DLI students at a South African university who are second language (L2) speakers of English?

The aim of the study was thus to identify the linguistic criteria which a successful study guide for L2 speakers of English should adhere to. This was achieved by conducting a literature review in search of linguistic criteria for effective writing/teaching, analysing three study guides from the same DLI in terms of these criteria, and evaluating the three study guides on the basis of the extent to which they meet the criteria.

This thesis is organised as follows: Chapter 2 offers some background on the concept of 'culture', the specific challenges facing lecturers and students at a DLI, and the central role of the study guide at a DLI. This chapter also provides an overview of literature on the features of effective study guides and effective teaching. Eight linguistic criteria for effective study guides are identified on the basis of this literature and discussed in more detail in Chapter 3. This chapter also contains a report on the critical evaluation of three DLI study guides in terms of the eight linguistic criteria. Chapter 4 provides conclusions, some suggestions for future research and a discussion of the practical implications of the findings of this thesis.

CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE OVERVIEW:
BACKGROUND ON DISTANCE LEARNING INSTITUTIONS AND ON EFFECTIVE WRITING

2.1 Introduction

As mentioned in chapter 1, the primary aims of this thesis are (i) to identify the linguistic criteria for an effective study guide for first-year DLI students who are L2 speakers of English, and (ii) to evaluate three existing first-year DLI study guides in terms of these linguistic criteria. Before one can attempt to achieve the first of these aims, though, one needs to consider the following questions:

(i) What are the characteristics of a tertiary institution (and the academic culture that it belongs to) in general?
(ii) What are the characteristics of a South African DLI which distinguish it from a residential learning institution?
(iii) What are the characteristics of first-year students at a DLI (in terms of, for example, educational background, socio-economic status, first and second languages, and age)?
(iv) What is the role of the study guide at a DLI?
(v) What are the features of effective writing and/or teaching in general?

In this chapter, I will address questions (i) to (iv) by providing some background on the concept of 'culture' (first generally and then specifically in terms of academic vs. non-academic cultures) (section 2.2); discussing the specific challenges facing lecturers and students at a DLI (section 2.3); and explicating the role of the study guide at a DLI (section 2.4). Finally, I will address question (v) by providing an overview of literature on the features of effective writing and effective teaching, in general (section 2.5).

2.2 The concept of 'culture'

The concept 'culture' has many definitions because it is a very complex concept (Atkinson 2004: 278–279). Hofstede (1986: 302) defines culture as the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one human group from another. According to Atkinson (2004: 283), anthropologists like Geertz (1973) are of the opinion that culture is made up of public symbols, such as words, gestures, drawings, musical sounds, mechanical devices and natural objects. By contrast, Goodenough, a cognitive anthropologist, argues that culture is basically shared knowledge that causes people to act in a certain way, and to make and interpret things in a distinctive manner (Atkinson 2004: 283–284). Atkinson (2004: 284) believes that the public symbols referred to by Geertz can only be understood by actively cognising and interpreting things in the way proposed by Goodenough. Culture therefore exists in the world and in the head (Atkinson 2004: 284).

Social situations have many of the same characteristics as culture, irrespective of the size of the group. Even smaller groups have methods of socialisation, norms, values, social practices, well-defined roles and hierarchies, as well as symbolic and material artefacts. Therefore, we should be able to use the concept of culture to study these phenomena (Atkinson 2004: 285).

Holliday (1994: 29–30) discusses the different sizes and levels of interacting cultures, from the culture of individual classrooms to national culture and the partially overlapping relations among them. For example, student culture would have both its own norms and practices which may overlap with national cultural norms and practices. Also, student culture may overlap with the norms and practices of youth culture, which would partially overlap with national culture. Likewise, the professional academic culture of lecturers in a particular situation would partly overlap with national culture, but would also in part be shared with other lecturers in other cultures in other parts of the world (Atkinson 2004: 286).

Connor (2004: 292) states that the cultural action that takes place in an education setting cannot solely be accounted for in terms of the national culture. The idea behind the notion of small cultures, then, is that when we break our groups down into complexly small, medium-sized and large cultures, we get a much more complex notion of the interactions of different cultural forces. In no sense, then, could the cultural action taking place in any particular educational setting be accounted for solely in terms of the national culture in which that

educational setting is located, although this is what has often been done in the past (Atkinson 2004: 286–287).

Atkinson (2004: 286) notes that professional academic cultures are the cultures connected to professional peer and reference groups, schools of academic thought and practice, professional approach, amongst others, generated by professional associations, unions, university departments and publishers, and so on. Academic cultures extend beyond the boundaries of the national culture. For example, English language teachers, in countries where English is not the mother tongue, have international links which they depend on for much of their sense of professional academic belongingness (Atkinson 2004: 286).

Van Heerden (1997) (in Qakisa-Makoe 2005: 46) believes that the sociocultural, economic and political environment of students determines their performance in the academic culture. Hofstede (1986: 307) agrees that the social positions of learners and teachers influence the education process. If the teachers and the learners come from different cultural backgrounds, it is likely that the learner will sometimes interpret the learning material differently from what the teacher intended. In such cases, the gap which already exists between the academic culture and the non-academic culture may be even bigger.

At this stage it might be noted that although Hofstede's (1986, 2001) work was, and still is, extremely influential, his conception of culture has also been criticised for being too narrow in that it focuses on national culture and oversimplifies the concept by equating nations with cultures (see, for example, McSweeny 2002; Baskerville 2003; Ailon 2008).

Mehan (1980: 131) defines pragmatic competence as the knowledge and skills that are necessary for membership in a society or community. In any culture, this competence is indicated by a participant's ability to interact effectively on the culture's terms with others who are already competent. In traditional cultures, the young are initiated into the culture (Johns 1990: 211). At an English-medium university, however, opportunities for direct initiation into the academic culture are few. Students enter a university where the rules, processes and procedures are set by the university authorities. These authorities seldom request the input of students. There are not many opportunities for real conversation and partnership or for other practices that might initiate these students into the academic culture. In general, the academics make the rules and the students are expected to obey the rules.

Also, lecturers present lectures, and students must make sense of the lectures. There is little room for conversation with students. The communicative context is determined by the institution and students have to adapt with minimal assistance (Johns 1990: 212).

In order to succeed, students must get to know the rules of the academic culture and meet the cognitive demands of the university (Johns 1990: 213). To get accepted into this academic culture, students must often sacrifice the view of their native cultures and of the academic cultures in which they were previously educated (Johns 1990: 213). In addition, the university curriculum has stringent requirements in terms of reading and writing, and students are often underprepared for the conventions or the volume of reading and writing assignments of their academic subjects. Moreover, they are taught by academics who, as members of the academic culture, have developed a good knowledge of the rules for writing and reading in their own disciplines, for special uses of lexicon and grammar, and for interpreting information from various sources. Johns (1990: 213) points out that university lecturers often expect students to master these rules while providing little practice in or instruction on these rules. Lecturers in various disciplines have their own conventions and apply rules without conscious attention. These conventions and rules are not always articulated explicitly to students; yet, students are expected to follow these conventions and rules and may not succeed unless they interact appropriately with the academic culture (Johns 1990: 213). However, Xing, Wang and Spencer (2008: 72) contend that achieving success in a new culture is not just about mastering the grammar and lexicon of the language. Aspirant members of a new culture should be able to negotiate cultural barriers and develop new ways of learning.

Mandell and Herman (1996: 4–5) state that most adult learners enter DLIs for pragmatic reasons and not intellectual reasons, i.e., adult learners enrol at a university to study for career advancement, and they may not want to become true academics, as in the case of traditional students who enrol for the value of learning and to create knowledge through research. For this reason, the gap that exists between the academic and non-academic culture may be even wider at a DLI. Traditions of the academic culture, such as reading with intensity and concentration, writing in the expository academic style, and doing library research, may be even more unfamiliar to such students. Non-traditional students, i.e., DLI students, may find these traditions of the academic culture unfamiliar, strange, or even frightening (Mandell and Herman 1996: 8).

Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) (in Qakisa-Makoe 2005: 51) claim that lecturers have the most cultural capital as determined by society, and tend to reward students who also have cultural capital. Students from lower classes are less likely to have the same cultural capital as their lecturers, in which case it is likely that students and lecturers will use different communication strategies.

People's frame of reference reflects their knowledge of the world. Chick (1989: 146) notes that lecturers and students have different frames of reference. For this reason, messages by lecturers may be incomprehensible to students. The bigger the difference in the frame of reference between lecturers and students, the bigger the communication gap between lecturers and students. In order to reduce the gap between the academic and non-academic cultures, the student must learn the communication strategies which are characteristic of the academic culture in order to succeed at university. When lecturers, for example, draw on what they consider to be general background to explain a concept, the message might well be misunderstood or even incomprehensible for the students if there is a vast difference between their frame of reference and that of the lecturer (Chick 1989: 147). Chick (1989: 147) believes that the gap between students and lecturers may be even bigger when students have been taught in large classes by less qualified teachers at school, and that students who have been taught in smaller classes by more qualified teachers may have an advantage over their peers.

An academic community may develop its own identity and culture that will separate it from the larger community in which it exists. People who cannot meet the standards for written or spoken communication in an academic culture may be deterred by the cognitive barriers and high standard of texts of the academic culture (Duszak 1997: 16). According to Swales (1990: 24) people enter an academic culture as a discourse community through persuasion and training. The academic discourse community has a minimum requirement of relevant content and discourse expertise, and people who demonstrate excellence in this field get accepted as members of the academic culture. Swales (1990: 27) emphasises the role of verbal skills in the reception and production of texts. By striving for discourse competence, members of the non-academic culture (students) will be allowed access to the academic culture (Duszak 1997: 15–16).

In this section I have argued that although every tertiary institution functions within a particular national culture (and is, no doubt, influenced by this national culture), all tertiary institutions also belong to what I have been referring to as the "academic culture". Specifically, lecturers belong to this academic culture while new students do not (yet). In the next section, I turn to the specific non-academic culture of students studying at a (South African) DLI.

2.3 The specific challenges facing lecturers and students at a DLI

According to Akinsolu (2005: 63) and Rowntree (1992: 29) distance learning refers to all informal and formal teaching conducted at a distance. Mehrotra et al. (2001: 1) describe distance learning as any formal approach to instruction in which the majority of the instruction occurs while the educator and learner are not in each other's physical presence. Here, communication between the lecturers and students takes place by means of written/multimodal text materials, electronic devices, mail and telecommunications. Distance learning has been known to provide access to education to people of all ages who do not have the opportunity to study full-time at a university, either because they do not live near a university or because they have full-time jobs (Mehrotra et al. 2001: ix). Also, distance learning provides an opportunity for younger people who do not meet the requirements to study at a residential university or who cannot afford the higher fees of a residential university (since the fees are generally lower at DLIs) (Qakisa-Makoe 2005: 45, 48).

Most of the students who enter universities do not perform to their maximum potential, as indicated by the high drop-out rate in higher education (Mehrotra et al. 2001: 149). The cause of the high drop-out rate at South African universities is most likely linked to the history of the inequalities that existed in the political situation, social situation and education in South Africa in the past (Qakisa-Makoe 2005: 48). Mehrotra et al. (2001: 140) note that DLIs have lower course completion rates than residential universities.

At a DLI, students entering the university are mostly first-generation students at a higher education institution and lecturers are aware of this (Qakisa-Makoe 2005: 45). First-generation students are the first members of their families to enrol at a higher education institution. In many instances it is a deliberate attempt by individuals to improve their social, economic and occupational standing. In contrast, their peers at residential universities mostly

have parents who attended higher education institutions, and for them going to university is the next logical step towards personal and career achievement (Nunez and Cuccaro-Alamin 1998: 1).

Naledi Pandor, former minister of Education, says that most first-generation students come from schools that have poor infrastructure, inadequate resources and teaching that may not prepare them adequately for higher education. When they enter university, they have very little knowledge and experience of university processes and requirements. They usually experience university as challenging, and they are faced with the choice of adapting or failing (*SA: Pandor: Teaching and Learning Colloquium).* According to Nunez and Cuccaro-Alamin (1998: 1), first-generation students often have family and background characteristics that are associated with risk for attrition. They are more likely than their peers to come from lower income families, to achieve lower grades, and have overall lower degree aspirations. Furthermore, a large percentage of the students are most likely underprepared to master complex new material and to adjust to new ways of learning (Qakisa-Makoe 2005: 45).

Van Heerden (1997) (in Qakisa-Makoe 2005: 50) points out that the majority of distance learning students are first-generation students whose parents may be illiterate or semi-literate. Shade (1997) (in Qakisa-Makoe 2005: 50) adds that in these students' homes learning most probably occurred through imitation and observation and they were therefore not encouraged to study. In addition, first-generation students may find the academic university culture difficult to cope with, and they may lack understanding of the university culture in general.

Students may enter higher education institutions, including DLIs, expecting that the teaching and learning experiences will resemble their past schooling. In most cases they expect the education process to be controlled by the teacher. In this regard, distance learning students in South Africa generally come from poor schools where educators determine the education process. When these students enter a DLI, they very often feel lonely, isolated and insecure in being left to their own devices in the education system (Qakisa-Makoe 2005: 52). Bourdieu (1997) (in Qakisa-Makoe 2005: 52) maintains that these students tend to possess little cultural capital due to their relatively low levels of linguistic and cultural competence, and they are unlikely to succeed at university. Cultural capital is imposed by the dominant group, in this case the university lecturers.

One of the major obstacles in distance learning is the fact that the student is isolated from the lecturers and other students. For example, students have no one with whom to discuss their problems relating to study material and academic content (Qakisa-Makoe 2005: 55). In this regard, Akinsolu (2005: 67) notes that most students regard learning or education as a social process where the student interacts with lecturers and fellow students. In a DLI, the student is deprived of this interaction with fellow students and lecturers, with the result that students feel a sense of isolation which may lead them to drop out of university. Also, many of the distance students come from different social and socio-economic backgrounds, and research shows that individuals with a high socio-economic status perform better academically than individuals with a lower socio-economic status (Akinsolu 2005: 67).

Akinsolu (2005: 67–68) and Mandell and Herman (1996: 4) state that distance learning students are usually adult students from many different social institutions (e.g. work and family) and have varied social occupations. Mehrotra et al. (2001: 19) add that distance learning makes learning possible for part-time learners, older learners, people seeking improved job skills, learners who live at a considerable geographic distance, people with special needs or disabilities, and even full-time students (who may prefer the more flexible schedule of distance learning or a more learner-driven approach to instruction). In most instances, the needs and demands of the DLI must take a backseat to the more immediate needs and demands of the person's work and family. There is a three-way relationship between distance learning, workplace and family: distance learning students can only cope effectively with their studies if they receive sufficient family support and sufficient support and cooperation from their employers in terms of, for example, study leave, bursaries and incentives (Akinsolu 2005: 68).

Sonnekus, Louw and Wilson (2006: 45) note that students at a DLI in South Africa come from rural as well as urban areas. The geographical distance between the students and the institution may influence service delivery to the students. Also, the level of exposure to modern technology may differ vastly between the students and the institution and from one student to the next. In addition, adult learners are more demanding than younger learners in terms of expecting information that is clear and culturally sensitive and that recognises unique differences in race, gender and the context of the learner (Sonnekus et al. 2006: 50). According to Rowntree (1992: 42–43) adult learners are rich in experience, goal-oriented and

self-aware. In addition, they have diverse beliefs and opinions about learning, and are very often more concerned than younger learners about getting value for their time and money.

It is sometimes argued that DLIs cannot provide sufficient support and resources to students (Mehrotra et al. 2001: 11). For this reason, distance learning materials need to be reader-friendly and accessible in order to provide adequate support to students. This may help distance students to cope with the course despite their many other non-academic responsibilities (Akinsolu 2005: 67).

According to Strevens (1987: 56), English is used by more people than any other language in the world, but its mother tongue speakers comprise only a quarter or a fifth of the total. As a result, the majority of learners of English in the world are being taught by non-native speakers of English. It is therefore expected that not all teachers will teach a so-called "standard" variety of English (Connor 1996: 17). Duszak (1997: 21) asserts that English comes closest to being an academic lingua franca. For this reason, non-native speakers of English are disadvantaged from the moment they enter most academic cultures.

In the DLI under discussion in this thesis, study material is designed and developed mostly in English and Afrikaans, in spite of the fact that South Africa has 11 official languages. In addition, students of this DLI speak more than 17 languages, which include the 11 official languages, as first languages, which means that only a small percentage of the students study in their mother tongue, English (Sonnekus et al. 2006: 50).

Erben and Fagan (1995: 57) point out that the function of language is not just for communication purposes and to facilitate learning in an educational setting, but it also serves to facilitate the learner into the learning process itself. Crosling (1983) (in Erben and Fagan 1995: 58) argues that not all students are equally aware of what the academic culture entails. She notes that L2 speakers of English are even further removed from the academic culture in a higher education institution where this language is the medium of instruction. According to Beasley (1992) (in Erben and Fagan 1995: 58), students are expected to think analytically and critically in an academic culture, but many L2 speakers of English are unfamiliar with this way of thinking and writing, which may even be in conflict with their own cultural values. Erben and Fagan (1995: 59) contend that even students who are proficient in English may find the academic work and the academic culture in the university inaccessible. For this

reason, Heese (2005: 25) states that the language used in study guides should be accessible to the student. In addition, students who do not have the reading skills to master the study materials are at a disadvantage.

Ballard (1992) (in Erben and Fagan 1995: 58) refers to the different expectations of lecturers and students when students enrol at a university. New students may become frustrated when they discover that learning strategies which had previously led to success at school do not necessarily guarantee success in the new situation. On the other hand, lecturers may be frustrated because the students may not able to learn the way they want them to learn. In this regard, Mangubhai (1992) (in Erben and Fagan 1995: 58) emphasises that students and lecturers should have an understanding of each other's cultures.

Rowntree (1981: 165) is concerned that students may lack the critical reading skills that are required in order to be successful at a higher education institution. In speech a speaker has the liberty to express an idea in several different ways but in writing a writer needs to communicate an idea as effectively as possible in the most economic way possible within the confined boundaries of the text. In printed text the writer may use fewer examples, and owing to space constraints the writer will most likely not repeat an explanation of a concept, but will instead refer the reader back to it. Grammar and syntax are less flexible in written text than in speech, which makes it more difficult for the writer to convey different meanings of a concept. Also, the writer is unable to use gestures, intonation, pauses, and changes in speed and volume to enable the student to grasp certain nuances of meaning. In addition, a reader cannot interrogate print as he would interrogate a lecturer, by, for example, asking for clarification or for more examples (Rowntree 1981: 166).

According to Mehrotra et al. (2001: 142), inexperienced lecturers at DLIs may contribute to a high drop-out rate of students. Writers of distance learning courses are often oblivious to the fact that students may not be competent readers and therefore may have difficulty in understanding the course content. Distance learning courses demand much reading from students, and students are expected to grasp the content of all of their subjects. In addition, if the language level of the text is too complex, even competent readers may experience difficulty (Paraide 1995: 97).

According to Connor (1996: 21), research has shown that written texts and their use vary according to cultural group. In English, for example, the reader expects and requires landmarks of coherence and unity as they read (Connor 1996: 20). Experiments have also shown that different societies process information differently (Qakisa-Makoe 2005: 49). Communication is basically the exchange of information in a meaningful way. However, this may pose a problem in education, because the meaning of words depends on how they are interpreted. People from different cultures may interpret the same message differently. Further, many students do not study through the medium of their mother tongue. Although many students prefer English, they may lack the English proficiency needed to master the academic content of their courses (Shade 1997, in Qakisa-Makoe 2005: 50).

Having discussed the challenges that students and lecturers face in distance learning, I now turn to the role of study guides in addressing these challenges.

2.4 The role of the study guide at a DLI

According to Kember (1991: 3), a study guide is a part of the self-instructional package of a student, and the content thereof is taken from textbooks, a collection of readings or a combination of the two. A study guide will contain some, but not all of the content of the course. The main purpose of a study guide is to guide the students in the study of the source of the prescribed course content (textbooks). The study guide may contain additional content written by the lecturer to supplement some of the content of textbooks (Kember 1991: 13). A study guide may also contain lecture notes, handouts, photocopied material, reference lists and samples of old exams or assignments (Mehrotra et al. 2001: 53). The main advantage of study guides is that the writer can select a number of sources from experts or the best teachers in the field. In addition, the writer can select the best sections from these sources (Kember 1991: 13).

During face-to-face contact the lecturer acts as the mediator between the text and the students. Amongst other things, the lecturer explains difficult concepts in simpler language, provides examples and illustrations to clarify the content, and answers students' questions. In distance learning, the study guide mediates between the lecturer and the student, as there is no face-to-face contact between lecturers and students (Heese 2005: 25).

According to Heese (2005: 25), the writer of the study guide should use accessible language in the form of didactic dialogue to enable the student to interact with the content. In this regard, Haque (1995: 63) contends that developing course materials for distance learning poses a major challenge. It may happen that inexperienced lecturers write course materials in textbook format which would often require face-to-face contact to enable the lecturer to explain and clarify the content (Haque 1995: 63).

Textbook writers often assume that there will be some face-to-face contact with students in which lecturers will clarify the content of the textbook. However, materials designed for distance learning should be written in such a way that no face-to-face contact between the lecturer and student is required. Consequently, the content should be presented as clearly as possible in distance learning material (Haque 1995: 63).

According to Rowntree (1990: 11), specially prepared study materials with specific course objectives are used in distance learning. The functions of the study material are the same as the functions of a lecturer in a face-to-face situation, namely guiding, motivating, expounding, explaining, reminding, provoking, asking questions, discussing, providing alternative answers, appraising students' progress, and so on (Rowntree 1990: 11). In this regard, Rowntree (1990: 82) refers to distance learning study materials as "tutorial-in-print", in which the lecturer imagines that he is tutoring one individual student for one to two hours at a time and everything he might want to say to the student is written down.

An example of a tutorial-in-print is a study guide which is aimed at helping students to get the best out of a not altogether satisfactory text. A study guide may include the following (Rowntree 1990: 90):

- the lecturer's overviews or summaries of a topic;
- concept maps of diagrams showing how the main topics or ideas are related;
- learning objectives;
- an annotated bibliography;
- specially written alternative explanations of sections of a text which the lecturer thinks are outdated, confusing, biased or inaccurate;
- relevant case studies;
- commentary on the text, paragraph by paragraph;

- questions and activities based on the subject;
- model answers to activities;
- checklists for students' responses to self-evaluation activities;
- suggestions for practical work;
- a glossary of technical terms;
- a self-assessed test;
- questions to discuss with fellow students; and
- instructions for assignments.

Study material should be learner-oriented. A learner-oriented programme always places the learner in the centre of the teaching and learning experience to ensure that the material/system is friendly, flexible and accessible (Haque 1995: 65; Heese 2005: 32). By means of the study guide the needs of the student can be addressed in a holistic manner by a change in focus from the content to the student (Seleetse 2002: 91).

An accessible study guide does not necessarily simplify the contents, but rather facilitates the student's understanding of key concepts, definitions, explanations and examples. When students do not understand the basic concepts and definitions they may have difficulty in understanding more challenging and abstract concepts, ideas and applications. Inaccessible text may cause the student to resort to rote learning (Heese 2005: 32).

Kilfoil (1995) (in Heese 2005: 32) adds that students should initially, at first-year level, receive more help (e.g., by carefully explaining concepts and the content in simpler terms), but as teaching progresses, such assistance should be diminished and ultimately withdrawn.

Given the central role of the study guide in distance learning and the need for study guides to be accessible to students from a wide variety of backgrounds, the question arises as to what the specific features of effective study guides are in the context of distance learning.

2.5 The features of effective writing and effective teaching

Effective study guides have to fulfil the criteria for effective writing as well as effective teaching, given that study guides are written texts which, at DLIs, are the primary, and

sometimes the only, teaching tools. In order to direct my search for literature on effective writing and teaching, I consulted academics at the centre for teaching and learning of a residential South African university. Although this university's undergraduate students are all residential, a large proportion of its postgraduate students do not live on campus and complete their degrees via distance learning. The academics that I approached are all involved in the development of study guides and other material used by departments which offer such distance learning degrees. For this reason, I feel that the literature which they referred me to is not randomly selected and instead represents core literature on effective writing and teaching. I carefully examined all of the literature that they referred me to in search of linguistic criteria for effective writing and teaching. In this section, each of the linguistic criteria that I identified is discussed in detail. These criteria are: (i) appropriate use of contextualisation markers, (ii) appropriate paragraphing, (iii) the use of metatext, (iv) explicitness, (v) cohesion and coherence, (vi) guiding inferencing, (vii) interpersonal style, and (viii) simplicity.

2.5.1 Appropriate use of contextualisation markers

Contextualisation markers are meta-linguistic devices that aid a coherent, meaningful interpretation of a message. They show logical relations between ideas and, in this way, help with the interpretation of information (Jung 2006: 1929).

According to Jung (2006: 1931), contextualisation markers include previews (e.g. *There are four stages of this culture shock*), topic shifters (e.g. *Let's go back a minute*), summarisers (e.g. *To sum up so far*), emphasis markers (e.g. *Let me repeat it*), exemplifiers (e.g. *for example*), relators (e.g. *goes along with that*), definition markers (e.g. *That's called*), rhetorical questions (e.g. *What is culture shock?*), and logical connectives (e.g. *first*, *second*, *and*, *or*, *well*, *all right*, *OK*, and *now*).

Research has shown that the lack or misuse of contextualisation markers leads to poor comprehension or interpretation of messages. Mauranen (1993: 254) found that readers who read a text with a large number of contextualisation markers comprehend the text more easily and may subsequently experience a sense of authority. Contextualisation markers also make it easy to identify the logical connections in the text. According to Mauranen (1992: 254),

research by Tyler et al. (1982) revealed that lecturers who are L2 speakers of the language of instruction (English) could not convey intended logical relations among ideas owing to the lack or misuse of contextualisation markers. In follow-up research the lecture of a L1 speaker of English was found to be well-organised and easy to follow owing specifically to the appropriate use of contextualisation markers.

By contrast, the lecture of a L2 speaker of English was found to be unclear, confusing and difficult to follow mainly because of the lack and incorrect use of contextualisation markers (Jung 2006: 1929). In addition, the research by Jung (2006: 1940) confirms that contextualisation markers help L2 speakers of English comprehend an L2 academic lecture. The absence of contextualisation markers may result in communication problems when listeners experience difficulty in understanding the message (Jung 2006: 1940).

2.5.2 Appropriate paragraphing

Kaplan (1966: 3) is of the opinion that each language offers to its speakers a ready-made interpretation of the world. Languages differ in terms of the thought patterns that their speakers prefer because of the link between world view and language. The English language and its related thought patterns have evolved out of the Anglo-European thought pattern, and the sequence of thought in English is essentially a Platonic-Aristotelian sequence. This sequence evolved from the philosophers of ancient Greece and was shaped by Roman, Medieval European, and later Western thinkers (Kaplan 1966: 3).

In this regard, the principle of linguistic relativity or the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, named after linguists Edward Sapir and Benjamin Lee Whorf, is highly relevant. At the beginning of the 20th century, these two linguists hypothesised that people's views of the world are affected and restricted by their mother tongues (see Sapir 1983 and Whorf 1956). The controversial claim of this hypothesis is that neither language nor culture can be understood without knowledge of the other, with the result that a person's view of the world may be *determined* by the structure of his/her language (Kaschula and Anthonissen 1995: 17).

According to this theory, a person's mother tongue provides a framework through which the world can be perceived. This theory has three primary implications for language. First, the physical environment in which people live may affect their language, as in the case of the

Nuer Africans who have many names for cattle. In this society cattle are culturally relevant and form an important part of the community. Second, the social environment of a society may affect the language, for example, people in different parts of the world refer to the members of their families in various ways (i.e. use different kinship terms). Third, the values of a society can also affect the language, for instance, there are certain words in certain societies which are prohibited as they are deemed unacceptable in conversation (so-called taboo words) (Kaschula and Anthonissen 1995: 17).

Soon after its proposal the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis received serious criticism, directed mainly at the fact that it did not make clear claims or testable predictions, and that when testable predictions were deduced from it, these predictions were not borne out (see, for example Lenneberg 1953; Berlin and Kay 1969; Pinker 1994). From the 1960s to the 1980s, a large number of researchers set out to completely discredit the principle of linguistic relativity. This movement away from linguistic relativity was accompanied but also driven by influential proposals by Noam Chomsky, who followed up on Lenneberg's ideas and argued that in order to account for certain facts of first language acquisition, one had to assume that human beings were born with an innate language faculty (a module of the brain) and that there was a universal grammar underlying the grammars of all human languages (see, for example, Chomsky 1955, 1957, 1964, 1986). Although a large portion of research in linguistics is still being conducted within the framework of Chomskyan universalism, there has also been a renewed interest in linguistic relativity, which has regained credibility in its weaker, less Whorfian formulation (see, for example, Gumperz and Levinson 1996; Wierzbicka 1993, 1996; Goddard 2003; Subbiondo 2005). According to this formulation, a person's mother tongue affects but does not determine his/her world view. One's mother tongue and culture are thus still believed to affect one's thought patterns, although the way in which this happens and the extent to which it happens, is still being investigated.

What is relevant to the discussion at hand is the fact that these (culturally affected) thought patterns affect paragraph structure, since in written language, separate units of thought are visually represented by separate paragraphs. Usually the separate paragraphs are conveniently indicated by indentation or by the skipping of lines, even though this is, strictly speaking, not a necessity. Importantly, though, paragraphing can be useful to the reader only if the indicated paragraphs are genuine units of thought (Kaplan 1966: 4).

Xing et al. (2008: 73) and Kaplan (1966: 14) note that languages differ in terms of the way their writers structure paragraphs, which is part of the language's logical system and has to be learnt anew in many instances of L2 acquisition. Each language and each culture has a unique paragraph order, and part of the learning of a language is the mastering of its logical system. Paragraph orders other than those normally regarded as acceptable in English do exist in other cultures. Here, even texts written in English may differ from the paragraphing structure which is regarded as the norm in English (Kaplan 1966: 14).

Xing et al. (2008: 74) state that speakers and readers of English can expect a linear thought pattern in texts as an integral part of their communication. An expository paragraph in the English language usually begins with a topic statement or central idea. A series of subdivisions of that topic statement, each supported by examples and illustrations, proceeds to develop the central idea to all the other ideas in the whole essay, and to employ that idea in its proper relationship with other ideas, to prove something, or perhaps to argue something (Kaplan 1966: 4–5; Connor 1996: 30).

The paragraph begins with a general statement of its content, and then carefully develops that statement by a long series of specific examples and illustrations (Xing et al. 2008: 74; Lewis and Paine 1985: 56). There is nothing in the paragraph that does not belong there or does not contribute to the central idea. The ideas flow in a straight line from the opening sentence to the last sentence. This is the deductive style of reasoning (Kaplan 1966: 6). However, the reverse procedure may also be employed in the English paragraph, i.e., it may state a whole series of examples and relate those examples to a single statement at the end of the paragraph. This corresponds to the inductive style of reasoning (Kaplan 1966: 5).

English-speaking readers typically expect that a piece of reading will be organised according to the deductive style. An inductive style is used when the writer expects a hostile or critical audience and feels that the audience must be led step-by-step to a legitimate conclusion based on evidence and reasons presented. Conversely, when writers think that the readers will have no quarrel with the conclusions, then they will probably proceed deductively, stating the conclusions or facts at the beginning (Hinds 1990: 99).

Kaplan (1966: 15) states that students will be able to understand the whole context of a text if they understand the logic on which the context is based. An understanding of paragraph

patterns can allow the student to relate syntactic elements within a paragraph and perhaps even relate paragraphs within the total context (Kaplan 1966: 2).

The English paragraph development can be compared to paragraph development in other languages. In Arabic, for example, paragraph development is based on a complex series of parallel ideas, both positive and negative (Kaplan 1966: 6; Connor 1996: 16). Also, in some Oriental writing, there is an approach to indirection. The development of the paragraph may be said to be "turning and turning into a widening gyre" (Kaplan 1966: 10; Xing et al. 2008: 74). The subject is never looked at directly, but the circles of gyres turn around the subject and show it from a variety of divergent views. Ideas and concepts are developed in terms of what they are not, as well as in terms of what they are. In English, this type of development may be viewed as odd (Kaplan 1966: 10).

2.5.3 The use of metatext

Text reflexivity, i.e., text about text, has a guiding, organising and clarifying function, and reflects the writer's awareness about text as text (Mauranen 1993: 253). Enkvist (1990: 15) uses the term "metatext" to refer to text about text. The function of metatext is to describe the composition of the text, but it does not contribute to the subject matter itself. A highly reflexive text, i.e., a text that contains a lot of text about text, can be characterised as personal, explicit and helpful. According to Anglo-American culture, metatext guides the readers, and makes them aware of the organisation, functional parts and central messages of the text (Mauranen 1993: 253).

However, Mauranen (1993: 254) cautions against too much text reflexivity. Explicit guidance of the reader's understanding has a didactic function, but too much text about text may be experienced as interfering, condescending, superfluous and patronising. In addition, it probably also distracts the readers by removing their attention from the main aim of the text, i.e. the actual information or content that the text seeks to convey (Mauranen 1993: 254). In study guides at a DLI, though, too much metatext is probably better than too little metatext, given that (i) what is too much for one student may be too little for another, (ii) there is already an (accepted) unequal relationship between writer and reader because one is the lecturer and the other is the student, and (iii) the most important feature of a study guide is

probably that it should be accessible to as many of its target readers (i.e. the students) as possible.

2.5.4 Explicitness

Mauranen (1993: 254) found that writers of English texts in general state the main point of the text and other important facts explicitly early on in the text. This is in contrast to Finnish texts, for example, where the main points and important elements are only stated later on in the text. Saville-Troike (1982) and Gudykunst and Ting-Toomey (1988) (in Duszak 1997: 14) state that Western cultures are individualistic and hence supportive of direct, assertive and explicit styles, while Oriental societies emphasise collective values and group harmony, and therefore write in an affective style of interacting dominated by vague and defensive formulations.

Placing the main point at the beginning of the text is like presenting the result and the most important elements at the beginning, and then giving an explanation of the result in the sentences that follow (Mauranen 1993: 254, 256). From the Anglo-American point of view, this strategy makes the reader's task easier, and it is more likely that the reader will understand the message.

If the writer places important information towards the end of the text without explaining the information explicitly, the reader may have a more difficult task. When information is not explained explicitly, readers may have to make frequent inferences, and try and supply missing information from existing knowledge to fill in the gaps. It is also possible that when the readers have reached the end of the text, they may have already exhausted their own capacities by supplying a considerable amount of information from that which they already know. Thus, a part of the information of the message interpreted by readers is produced by the reader. Further, conclusions or inferences may have been reached by the reader already before the end of the text when it is finally expressed (Mauranen 1993: 256). The risk of readers misinterpreting the text is also higher since they have used a lot of their own knowledge to construct the message of the text. Moreover, it is difficult for the reader to interpret the sentences fully at the beginning of the text, before other sentences are read. The reader is then not sure of the full interpretation of the sentences until the end of the text has been reached (Mauranen 1993: 257).

According to Mauranen (1993: 257), the Anglo-American rhetorical strategy of placing important information at the beginning of the text appears to be aimed at readers who do not necessarily know what the writer knows. In this regard, Hinds (1987) (in Mauranen 1993: 257) made the distinction between "writer responsible" and "reader responsible" cultures. It may appear that the Anglo-American writers assume that it is the writer's responsibility to ensure that the reader comprehends the text and that the facts are communicated successfully. Also, it seems that writers who place the main ideas last, and who do not make use of reflexive texts, place the responsibility on the readers. One could get the impression that these writers assume that the readers are intelligent and knowledgeable. On the other hand, the Anglo-American strategy of placing important information at the beginning of the text seems to respect the reader's time and effort (Mauranen 1993: 257).

Mauranen (1993: 257) found that Finnish writers in general do not use metatext. Although explicit guidance provides a didactic element to the text, Finnish writers are of the opinion that it could be considered patronising if the writer states information that should be obvious to the reader. From the Finnish point of view, Anglo-American writers are sometimes seen as controlling the reader and leaving less room for the reader's own unique, interpretations by trying to be helpful and very explicit, and by guiding the reader's interpretative processes (Mauranen 1993: 257).

From the Anglo-American point of view, on the other hand, Finnish writers' humble politeness and unintentional obscurity can be criticised as being elitist and condescending (Mauranen 1993: 257). It can be construed as the writers trying to display their learnedness and wisdom, which forces the reader to follow the writer's thoughts. If readers cannot follow the argument, it is their problem. It can be interpreted as the writer speaking with authority, downwards from intellectual heights (Mauranen 1993: 258).

Anglo-American writers display their authority by presenting an argument or fact very explicitly. By guiding the reader's process step by step, the writer assumes a pedagogic or didactic role. If the writer does not guide the reader's interpretation and understanding very much or deliberately, the assumption of the writer is that there is a great deal of shared knowledge between himself and the reader. This could be the case if the target audience, in this case the students, is homogenous. One could deduce that in a homogenous cultural

context, it is acceptable and natural for the writer to be more implicit. In a heterogeneous context, on the other hand, it would become important and even necessary for the writer to be more explicit and not leave it to the readers to interpret the facts in their own way, as these interpretations could be very diverse and possibly inaccurate (Mauranen 1993: 258). Also, if a writer writes for academics within a specialist field or discipline, he could assume that the target audience is homogenous, and then write in a less explicit way, as there is a shared knowledge and understanding between himself and the readers (Mauranen 1993: 258). In such a case, a writer who states facts and ideas explicitly may be experienced as patronising and negative. However, explicitness in writing is acceptable, and might even be necessary, when the members of the members of the target audience come from a wide variety of cultural backgrounds, or when they do not have the same level of expertise as the writer and are not members of a narrow specialist field (Mauranen 1993: 259).

2.5.5 Cohesion and coherence

It has been shown that texts which are high in cohesion are more easily comprehensible for students (see, for example, Ozuru, Dempsey and McNamara 2009). In their influential book *Cohesion in English*, Halliday and Hasan (1976) distinguished between cohesion and coherence, noting that cohesion is a feature of a text while coherence is a feature of the reader's mental representation of a text, the idea being that cohesive texts lead to coherent mental representations (see also Halliday and Hasan 1989). A text should thus be more than "just a string of sentences" (Halliday and Hasan 1976: 291) − although a text does consist of separate sentences, these sentences should be linked to each other in order for the text to form a meaningful whole. This cohesion is achieved by means of linguistic devices such as reference, substitution, ellipsis, conjunction and lexical cohesion (a taxonomy provided by Halliday and Hassan 1976) (though see also Hoey's 1991 proposal).

Reference involves words which signal to the reader whether a specific piece of information should be retrieved from the preceding text, from text which follows or even from outside of the text (for example, from the situation or context – in the case of a study guide, the context could be the field which the specific academic module focuses on). Substitution refers to substituting a more general word/phrase with a more specific word/phrase (which avoids repetition and again links pieces of information to each other). Ellipsis involves omitting a word/phrase when this word/phrase can be left implicit without detracting from the meaning

of a clause/sentence. These three cohesive devices are illustrated by the following sequence of sentences: *I love my new laptop. This is the best one I have ever had. Mine is black while John's is grey.* Here *this* refers back to *my new laptop* (reference), *one* refers to laptops (substitution) and in the last sentence, the word *laptop* is omitted completely (ellipsis) (rather than saying *My laptop is black while John's laptop is grey*).

Conjunctions link consecutive sentences, statements or ideas to each other in a meaningful way by signalling the specific relationship between them (for example, using *and* to introduce a complementary idea or *however* to introduce an idea which contrasts with preceding ideas). Finally, lexical cohesion involves using the same word repeatedly or using words from the same semantic network throughout a text; in this way, it will be clear to the reader what the focus of the text is.

For Enkvist (1990: 12-14) a text is coherent if one can build a consistent picture of the relevant aspects of the world around it and if one can easily summarise and interpret it, while a text is incoherent if the picture it presents differs from a reader's experience of the world and/or if a reader cannot build a plausible scenario around it. Kaplan (1966: 5) states that a piece of writing may be considered coherent when it contains nothing superfluous and it omits nothing essential to the achievement of its purpose. A work is coherent when the sequence of its parts is controlled by some principle which is understood by the reader. One can say that a work is unified when the writing has all its necessary and sufficient parts (Kaplan 1966: 5).

2.5.6 Guiding inferencing

Inferencing involves the reader deducing or inferring meaning from the message of the text, interpreting a text by adding information which is not overtly present. It can be likened to supplying the missing link. Inferencing depends on the knowledge of the writer and reader, as well as the context (Enkvist 1990: 17).

Inferencing requires the writer and reader to share a picture of the relevant aspects of the world. The writer must manage inferencing properly by adapting the message to the knowledge, reading capacity and reading ability of the reader. The writer must estimate what the reader already knows and how good the reader is at discourse processing under the

relevant circumstances. It is therefore important that the writer includes retrievable world knowledge in the text. We know about the world partly because of our knowledge of the situation in which the communication act occurs, and partly because of our experiences beyond the immediate context. When we interpret a text, we activate and draw on the relevant parts of our knowledge store to fill in the gaps in the actual chain of propositions (Enkvist 1990: 17).

According to Enkvist (1990: 20), a message is not interpreted in a vacuum; it triggers a process of interpretation. The interpretation of a message is affected by who interprets the message and by the existing conditions. In this regard, the interpreter's previous knowledge plays a crucial role in how he interprets the message (Enkvist 1990: 21). Interpretation is thus determined not only by knowledge of the language, but also by the extent of the reader's ability to retrieve relevant information from schemata, scripts and other organised deposits of knowledge. Also, writers are dependent on what they can retrieve from their cognitive store and their knowledge of what the readers can comprehend. People can interpret a text when they can build a plausible text world around it. If the reader can build a world around a text, he can interpret the text in many ways depending on the extent of his own text world (Enkvist 1990: 21).

It is assumed that those who know the language well will understand more of the text than those who do not, but comprehending a text is always affected by the individual writer's previous knowledge of the student/reader and the situational context (Enkvist 1990: 21). For this reason, Enkvist (1990: 22) suggests that writers provide examples of relatively neutral topics, that is, on topics that one can assume the students are equally familiar with or that are at least part of the specific subject's curriculum.

2.5.7 Interpersonal style

According to Connor (1996: 18), writing involves more than a discursive process of generating, organising and translating ideas into text. Writing is regarded as an interaction within a particular discipline or scholarly community and is, therefore, viewed as interactive and social in nature.

In academic communities the level of interactivity of academic texts differs. Writers who prefer a more impersonal style will adopt a less interactive style, and writers who prefer a more interpersonal style will adopt a more interactive style (Duszak 1997: 18).

According to Halliday (1973: 41), this interpersonal style refers to the use of language to express social and personal relations. Words such as *perhaps* and *may* belong to a category of words that serve the interpersonal function of language (Ventola 1997: 157). A dialogic style in a text may also serve the interpersonal function of language. Duszak (1997: 13) notes that writers who are sensitive to readers' needs may adopt a dialogic style, which is typical of Anglo-American texts. A writer who writes in a dialogic style gives more guidance, interacts with the readers, and writes reader-friendly texts that are more interpersonal in nature. This is in contrast to the impersonal style of German, Polish and Czech writers, for example, where writers use creative thinking to produce texts in the name of science and for the sake of truth, rather than writing for the reader's joy and benefit (Duszak 1997: 13).

The level of assertiveness in the text may also determine whether a text will be interpersonal or impersonal in nature. It is therefore important that writers use the correct tone in academic writing. Writers who come across as being too assertive may give the impression that they are arrogant. Conversely, not being assertive enough may give the impression that the writer lacks confidence (Ventola 1997: 176). The assertiveness of writers varies between assertive (*This is the case*) and tentative (*This may be the case*) depending on the writer's credibility. Writers must be aware that their linguistic or textual accountability may lead to judgements about their expertise. Readers' evaluations of texts are essentially readers' evaluations of writers, and the readers' perception of the writing may determine the future status of that writer (Duszak 1997: 13).

The English system of modality allows writers to modify their messages. For example, when a statement is made, communicators can modify it on the basis of their assessment of its probability and frequency (Ventola 1997: 161). Amongst other things, modal verbs, modal adverbs and particles, the use of certain personal pronouns and the avoidance of others, the use of agentless passives and other impersonal expressions can be used to modify statements that are assertive so that they come across as more tentative (Ventola 1997: 163).

In order to interact with the reader, writers use hedging. Lakoff (1972) (in Kreutz and Harres 1997: 182, 184) uses the term "hedging" when referring to the "fuzziness" of language in formal and informal speech, and also in academic writing. She states that hedges are words which make meanings fuzzier. Hedging has been described as words indicating uncertainty and tentativeness. A possible explanation for the use of hedging is the need to interact with the reader and to include the reader in the process of writing and reading. It has the function of downtoning, mitigation and politeness, and the extent to which hedging is used may indicate whether or not writers are reader-centred (Kreutz and Harres 1997: 184).

2.5.8 Simplicity

Lexical density is a measure of how much information there is in a particular piece of writing. Writers are often under considerable pressure because they know that their writing might be considered as either too simple or too complex. If they write in a too simple way, they get criticised by peers that they are not knowledgeable enough; if they write in a too complex way, it adds to the lexical density of texts and the message does not get conveyed effectively to the readers (Ventola 1996: 154, 160–161).

In order to reduce the lexical density of texts, writers are advised to write in short, clear sentences and to avoid "academese" (Ventola 1996: 154; Lewis and Paine 1985: 56). They are also told to avoid the use of heavily complex constructions, nominalisations and the overuse of technical terms (Ventola 1996: 155). However, writers also get the opposite advice, namely to write in a more complex, scientific way, and to use an impersonal, formal tone (Ventola 1996: 155). Such conflicting pieces of advice sometimes leave writers confused. If a writer's text is too simple or too complex, the text will be less appreciated by the readers than a text that is well-balanced in terms of language and content (Ventola 1996: 156). For this reason, a writer should be aware of the various linguistic choices which he has to make and their effects on the text (Ventola 1996: 157).

When a text is packed with information, readers find it hard to comprehend, meanings are hidden, and the text becomes an enforcer of prestige and power, owing to its abstract nature (Halliday 1988: 176). As a result, it is difficult for the general public, including students, to understand the text. In addition, this type of writing results in a static, ambiguous text, especially for the novice reader (the student) (Ventola 1996: 185). This adds to the lexical

density of texts. A student may not yet have mastered the skills necessary to decode such texts (Ventola 1996: 185). Ventola (1996: 186) suggests that writers should be more reader-oriented by unpacking the large amount of information presented by their texts.

Different ways to measure readability have been developed throughout the years. One of the ways involves using the Fog Index to measure the "fogginess" or heaviness of a text by judging its average length of sentences and the proportion of multi-syllabled words that it contains (Rowntree 1990: 230). The Fog Index of a piece of writing is calculated as follows (Rowntree 1990: 230; Ellis and Hopkins 1985: 35–36):

- Take a random sample of 100 words.
- Count the number of complete sentences. Stop the sentence count with whichever sentence ends nearest the 100-word target.
- Divide the number of words (100) by the number of sentences to arrive at the average sentence length.
- Count all the words that have three syllables or more.
- Add the average sentence length to the number of long words (with three syllables or more). Multiply this total by two, and divide the answer by five.

For example, if the average length of a sentence is 17 words and the passage contained 8 words with three syllables or more, the Fog Index is 10. Gunning (1952) (in Rowntree 1990: 230) states that a score of 12 is at a danger point, and writers should strive to keep the Fog Index of their writing as low as possible. According to Ventola (1996: 157–158) a score over 13 is at a danger point.

2.6 Conclusion

In this chapter I have argued that the gap which exists between the academic culture (lecturers) and the non-academic-culture (students) at a residential university is even greater at a DLI (section 2.2). At a DLI, lecturers and students are faced with a number of challenges, many of which stem from the fact that students are not adequately prepared for university, mainly owing to the lack of literacy skills and low levels of English proficiency. In addition, many of the students at a DLI are first-generation students, whose parents also never had the opportunity to become part of the academic culture (section 2.3).

The study guide issued to students at a DLI substitutes for the guidance, teaching, clarification, expanding and explaining that a lecturer would do face-to-face at a residential institution. Because of this central role of the study guide, the language used in it should be clear in order to facilitate effective communication between lecturer and student (section 2.4). In the final section of this chapter (section 2.5) eight linguistic criteria for effective writing/teaching in general were discussed. In the next chapter, I return to these eight criteria, showing how each is relevant in the specific context of the study guide, and I report on an evaluation of three existing study guides for first-year DLI students on the basis of the eight criteria.

CHAPTER 3
A CRITICAL EVALUATION OF THREE STUDY GUIDES

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter identified a number of characteristics of DLIs, as well as the first-year students who attend these institutions, which should be kept in mind when writing a study guide for these students. Although neither residential first-years nor DLI first-years form a homogenous group, three over-arching generalisations are possible in terms of first-year DLI students. Firstly, the majority of these students are older than the average residential student and have added responsibilities related to their families and jobs. Secondly, they come from a wider variety of cultural, educational and socio-economic backgrounds than residential first-years. Finally, the majority of them do not speak English as a first language, although this is the medium of instruction at the DLI referred to in this thesis; in fact, many of these students have a low proficiency in their L2 English, which is usually their third or fourth language rather than their second language (cf. section 2.3).

In addition to these differences between the students who attend a residential university versus a DLI, there are also obvious differences between the contexts in which teaching and learning take place at these two types of institutions: whereas the residential student has regular contact with other students and with lecturers, the distance student has to make a conscious effort to communicate with other students and with lecturers. It is safe to say that many students do not make this effort and that contact between fellow-students and between students and lecturers is usually not face-to-face but rather involves conversations via telephone or e-mail. Furthermore, whereas at a residential institution teaching takes place through a number of mediums – including, (almost) daily lectures, (usually weekly) tutorials, lecture hand-outs, textbooks and additional readings – at a DLI the primary, and in some cases the only, teaching tool is the study guide (cf. section 2.4). These observations are not meant to downplay the advantages offered by DLIs, most importantly that they offer the opportunity of tertiary education to a substantial number of students who would otherwise simply not have been able to receive tertiary education (because of family or job considerations, geographical distance from residential tertiary institutions, or the lack of funding required for studying at a residential institution) (cf. section 2.3). Instead, the observations above are meant to emphasise the central role of study guides at DLIs and the

need for effective study guides. Given the overview of research on guidelines for effective writing/teaching (cf. section 2.5), it should be clear that each of the features of effective writing/teaching is applicable to a greater or lesser extent in the context of study guide writing. Each of these features is revisited in turn in section 3.2 with a view to making explicit how each feature instantiates a linguistic criterion specifically for effective study guides with first-year DLI students as their target audience. Section 3.3 reports on the critical evaluation of three first-year study guides on the basis of the linguistic criteria set out in section 3.2.

3.2 Linguistic criteria for effective study guides

Given the considerations set out in sections 2.2 to 2.5 of the previous chapter, I have identified the following list of linguistic criteria for effective study guides at a DLI:

(i) Appropriate use of contextualisation markers
(ii) Appropriate paragraphing
(iii) The use of metatext
(iv) Explicitness
(v) Cohesion and coherence
(vi) Guiding inferencing
(vii) Interpersonal style
(viii) Simplicity

Each of these criteria was discussed in some detail in the previous chapter in terms of effective writing/teaching in general. In sections 3.2.1 to 3.2.8 below, each criterion is briefly discussed in terms of the special context of study guides for first-year DLI students.

3.2.1 Appropriate use of contextualisation markers

Study guide writers and lecturers should make use of contextualisation markers to show logical relations between ideas. These contextualisation markers may help students who are L2 speakers of English to interpret the content of the study guide more easily and more accurately. Writers may use contextualisation markers to introduce content, to change the topic, to summarise a chunk of content, to emphasise certain sections and ideas, to link

different pieces of information, to stimulate the student through the use of rhetorical questions, and to connect sections of related information (cf. section 2.5.1).

The use of contextualisation markers may also assist L2 speakers in following the logical order of ideas, since the writer can guide the student's understanding of the content by the use of contextualisation markers. In addition, contextualisation markers may be used to signal the cohesive links between ideas to ensure that the students understand the writer's intended communication.

3.2.2 Appropriate paragraphing

Writers can use paragraphing to make their thought structure visual to the students by indicating the separate units of thought (cf. section 2.5.2). This division of thought is especially useful for students who are L2 speakers of English. Writers must, however, take care to ensure that their paragraph breaks are not arbitrary and that their paragraphs are genuine units of thought in a logical order, otherwise it may mislead and confuse students, especially those who are still in the process of learning how the logical system of English differs from that of their L1.

I suggest that writers, when they write study guides for first-year students who are not familiar with the English language, ensure that the paragraphs follow a linear thought pattern, in line with the canonical thought pattern of English. For example, writers should start an expository paragraph with a topic statement, and then proceed to explain the statement by means of specific examples and illustrations. Writers should ensure that all the paragraphs contribute to the central idea, and that all the ideas flow in a straight line. This applies especially to first-year students, as one does not expect them to be particularly critical, since they are probably more concerned with understanding an argument than being convinced of its validity.

When the writer writes for students who are more familiar with academic writing (for example, students in their second or third year at university), he can start experimenting with the inductive style of reasoning, stating arguments, evidence and explanations, which all build up to the statement of the conclusion at the end. The inductive style is appropriate for such (more mature) students, as the assumption can be made that they are more critical, that

they need to be convinced of an argument and that, therefore, they expect a step-by-step explanation which will allow them to critically evaluate the validity of an argument for themselves.

In addition, writers should pay special attention to the length of paragraphs in study guides. Rowntree (1990: 227) states that each paragraph should contain a main idea and elaborate on or lead up to a key sentence. Further, writers should be cognisant of the fact that the breaks between paragraphs in study guides can be used as thought pauses. They should therefore try to avoid paragraphs which are too long but should also avoid too many short paragraphs (Rowntree 1990: 228): whereas the writer may "lose" the student if a paragraph is too long, using a large number of very short paragraphs is also not advisable as this disrupts the flow of the writing.

3.2.3 The use of metatext

The writer can use metatext (text about text) effectively to organise and clarify the content, as well as to navigate the student through the study guide. Using metatext can make the content explicit. In addition, metatext gives a more personal touch to the writing, as the writer addresses the student and guides him through the text. The writer can make the student aware of the organisation of the text, the most important themes or messages of the text, and the functions and role of certain sections of the text. More mature students (i.e. non-first-years) might feel that such metatext is unnecessary, that the writer is stating the obvious, distracting their attention from the content of the text and being patronising. However, as was mentioned in 2.5.3, first-year students will probably not experience metatext as patronising, given that it will help ease them into the academic culture. It is also important to remember that study guides are used in the same way as textbooks and readings are at a residential university but that they fulfil an additional function at a DLI in that they act as the primary (or only) contact between lecturer and student, thus also replacing the lectures that a student would attend at a residential university. For this reason, it is necessary that the student will "hear" the lecturer's voice in the language used in the study guide.

3.2.4 Explicitness

Writers of English can, in accordance with the trend of English academic texts, state the main ideas and important information explicitly early on in the text (cf. section 2.5.4). This will focus the student's attention on the important information in the study guide. It is not advisable, especially in study guides for entry-level courses, to place important information later on in the text. This will place considerable processing demands on the student, since the student, who is not familiar with academic texts to begin with, will be expected to interpret and supply missing information. The student may misinterpret the intended message, and may feel unsure as he progresses through the text. This uncertainty may result in the student giving up on the text.

Placing the most important information at the beginning of the text may be helpful to first-year students who are still trying to get to grips with the academic culture and content, as well as students who do not possess the academic reading skills that are required from an aspirant member of the academic culture. Making important information explicit at the beginning of the text has been criticised as an effort to control readers. This criticism might be valid in the case of academic texts written for more mature students or for specialists in the relevant field. However, in my opinion first-year students *need* to be guided by the writer. I base my claim on evidence extracted from the literature review presented in chapter 2, namely that first-year students at a DLI may lack the appropriate academic literacy skills needed to find their own way through an academic text. (This is not to say that students entering a residential university do not also struggle with academic literacy; the lack of academic literacy skills of first-years is simply more common at a DLI, for reasons set out in section 2.3.)

This method of making important points explicit early on in the text is especially appropriate for heterogeneous groups who do not possess the same knowledge or skills, and who come from different educational backgrounds. And, as explained in section 2.3, students at a large DLI do form a heterogeneous group. There is thus more than one reason for writers of DLI study guides to give the important information upfront and expand on it as the ideas progress. Once the students have become more confident, the writer can place more responsibility on them as the readers. At first-year level, however, where students are still novices in the academic culture, it is best for the writer to take the responsibility and present the information in a more explicit way.

Reed (2001: 61) proposes the use of strong action words such as *notice, reflect* and *write* in order to increase the explicitness of a message. She also notes that the passive form should be avoided. For example, the passive form *Calculators may be used* should be substituted with *You may use a calculator*, simply because the sentence in the active voice is more explicit than the sentence in the passive voice and is, therefore, easier to process and almost impossible to misunderstand if one knows all the words (Rowntree 1990: 218).

3.2.5 Cohesion and coherence

Study guide writers should aim to create a text which is high in cohesion, since, as noted in section 2.5.5, this is believed to aid reading comprehension. They should thus provide explicit links between ideas in the content of the study guide by means of linguistic devices such as references, substitution, ellipsis, conjunctions and lexical cohesion. Following Enkvist's (1990) proposal (cf. section 2.5.5), study guide writers should also try to build a picture of the relevant aspects of the world around a text or section of text. One way of doing this is to use examples that students can relate to. Given the heterogeneity of the first-year group at a DLI, it might be very difficult for the writer to find examples that all students can relate to, as students come from different backgrounds and therefore have different life experiences and frames of reference. Nevertheless, writers should at least try to make use of relatively neutral examples that most students will be able to relate to.

With regard to Kaplan's (1966) proposal (cf. section 2.5.5), another property of the text that will influence its coherence is whether the text contains all and only those pieces of information that are necessary for the relevant message to be conveyed. Ideally, no steps or puzzle pieces should be missing from the text (see also section 3.2.4 on explicitness); however, the text should not contain superfluous information (added as asides just for interest's sake) either, since such information might distract the reader from the primary message. In short, the idea is that the text of the study guide should be coherent to such an extent that the students will be able to interpret and summarise the entire text or at least certain important sections of it. This will only be possible if the links between separate statements in the text are made explicit and the text ends up constituting a meaningful whole.

3.2.6 Guiding inferencing

The writer must keep in mind the limited ability and capacity of students to process academic texts. In this regard, it may be useful to provide the writer with a profile of the target audience (in this case including, for example, information on the learners' ages, educational backgrounds, L1s, levels of L2 English proficiency, and literacy skills) before he starts writing. This may help him to choose appropriate lexical items, sentence constructions and examples for the text.

Rowntree (1990: 220–221) cautions that specialist vocabulary should be introduced with care and in such a way that students do not regard it as jargon. He provides six guidelines regarding the use of technical or specialist terms. First, specialist terms should only be used when they are essential for the students' comprehension of new concepts. Second, a term should be explained very carefully when it is used for the first time, i.e. giving the purpose, definition and examples of the concept. Third, reminders should be given at certain points, e.g. when the term is used again. Fourth, the number of technical terms in a paragraph should be limited. Fifth, alternative technical terms for the same concept should not be used. Finally, once a technical term is introduced, the writer should not revert to the original (non-technical) term (Rowntree 1990: 222).

To make inferencing easier, the writer should use precise words and avoid words that are general, abstract or vague. For example, the sentence *Extreme danger is associated with the incorrect operation of this equipment* can be replaced with *Keep the safety shield down or this machine will kill you* (Rowntree 1990: 215). Inferencing will also be easier when a text is explicit and coherent and includes an appropriate amount of metatext, all of which lead the student in a certain direction, towards the writer's intended message, and hence reduce the chances of students misunderstanding or failing to understand the information presented in the text.

3.2.7 Interpersonal style

Writers must take care to use the correct tone when they write study guides. As explained in section 2.5.7, they should be neither too assertive (which might make them seem arrogant)

nor too unassertive (as this might make them seem uncertain of themselves). In short, the writer's tone should make students feel that they can trust him to provide guidance.

Writers should also consider the use of modality. Modality is defined as a way of marking the degree of certainty about information, but it may also be used as a device for marking the writer's approach to the addressee. For example, a writer might underplay his certainty about a piece of information because he does not want to alarm or offend the reader (Reed 2001: 59). Writers therefore need to make conscious decisions about the degree of certainty with which they present certain pieces of information. Writers should, for example, consider whether they want to invite students to take part in an activity or whether they want to instruct them to do so. In this regard, Rowntree (1990: 232) advises writers to use a conversational style. Similarly, George (1994: 88) advises writers to produce didactic conversation by incorporating both spoken and written language into the text.

The writer can adapt his writing style in an effort not to come across as too assertive, leaving room for probability and tentativeness, which may stimulate students to assess the writer's statements and to reflect on them, rather than just learning them by heart. To achieve this, the writer can use modal verbs, modal adverbs, particles and agentless passives. These words/structures give an interpersonal touch to the writing and have an interacting function. At this stage it might be noted that the skilled writer will attempt to balance the need for explicitness with the need for leaving room for reflection: while the message should be made explicit, the student should be allowed to reflect on this message. For first-year students, the need for explicitness might, however, outweigh the need for room to reflect.

In the previous section (3.2.6), it was mentioned that writers need to take their target audience into account (especially in terms of reading skills and L2 English proficiency levels) in order to choose appropriate vocabulary items and sentence constructions. A challenge for study guide writers is to keep vocabulary and sentence constructions simple while at the same time stimulating students and maintaining their interest. Writers can develop a "conversation in print" by including personal references (*I*, *you*, *we*), choosing to decrease the lexical density of sentences, choosing to replace some abstract nouns with verbs and choosing to vary the modality of the text (Reed 2001: 65).

Some notes are in order regarding specific vocabulary items. Firstly, although using *we* creates an atmosphere of interaction and cooperation between writer and reader, this pronoun is not appropriate in all cases. When the writer says *Now we will consider a number of examples* it might be unclear to the student who *we* refers to: the writer and other editors or the writer and the student? In such cases *we* might be replaced with *you* so that the sentence is changed to *You will now consider a number of examples*. The use of this pronoun is less confusing and more honest, and leaves no room for misinterpretation (Reed 2001: 58–59).

Secondly, even though the word *may* is often used as a politeness device in academic writing, writers might want to avoid using this word because students might regard it as a sign of hesitancy or a lack of confidence, especially when they are used to prescriptive didactic devices (Reed 2001: 60).

Thirdly, Rowntree (1990: 207) suggests that writers use personal pronouns in order to make their writing friendly and informal. He advises that writers should speak to the learner directly by calling the learner "you" rather than "the reader" or "the learner". In the same way, writers should refer to themselves as "I" or "we" rather than "the writer(s)" or "the author(s)". Writers may use rhetorical questions to stimulate interest, but should always make it clear when a question is rhetorical, and does not involve an exercise for learners. For example, when the writer says *How shall we approach this?*, it should be clear that this is a rhetorical question (Rowntree 1990: 210).

Fourthly, writers should consider using contractions such as *I'm* for *I am* and *you're* for *you are* to make their writing conversational, since contractions have the effect of giving a less formal tone to the writing. However, contractions should only be used in instances where one would have used them in speech (Rowntree 1990: 201–202). Although the use of contractions in academic texts is sometimes frowned upon, it is important to remember that the study guide differs from an article in an academic journal in several ways, specifically in that the target audience of the academic journal is already part of the academic culture, while the target audience of the study guide is still being eased into this culture.

Finally, Rowntree (1990: 210) recommends that writers use a "light touch" by being serious but not solemn, and by being precise, particular and penetrating but not pedantic. Writers

should also exploit the human angle in whatever they are writing about by making use of examples which refer to aspects of the learners' world (Rowntree 1990: 211).

3.2.8 Simplicity

At this point I return to the fact that study guide writers have to make conscious decisions regarding which syntactic structures to use in the text. In making these decisions, the writer should consider the students' (assumed) levels of academic literacy, specifically in terms of the language that is used in the study guide. Learners who are not proficient in (reading) the language used in the study guide may, for example, struggle to understand complex sentences containing embedded clauses (Reed 2001: 57). Although the length of sentences should vary within a text, sentences should in general be kept relatively short and follow a simple pattern (Rowntree 1990: 223). This will make it easier for the learner to figure out the relationship between consecutive clauses (Rowntree 1990: 225). In addition, the more often a full stop is used, the more often the reader will pause for thought, and it is usually during these pauses that the meaning of a statement will become clear (Rowntree 1990: 223).

Reed (2001: 61) also warns against nominalisation, or "nouning of the verb", for example, using *transformation* instead of the simpler verb form *transform*. Halliday (1985b) (in Reed 2001: 61) argues that such nominalisations increase the lexical density of a text, and make the text more abstract and, consequently, more difficult to understand.

Easily processable English involves short sentences which are, as far as possible, made up of familiar, simple words (Ventola 1996: 158; Lewis and Paine 1985: 57). Keeping this in mind, the word *count* might be used instead of the word *enumerate* and the word *burial* might be used instead of the word *internment* (Rowntree 1990: 213; Ventola 1996: 162). Whenever appropriate, writers should not use a phrase when they could have used a single word, and unnecessary words should be eliminated. A phrase such as *in the approximate vicinity of*, for example, could be replaced with *about*, and *a large number of* could be replaced with *many* (Rowntree 1990: 212; Lewis and Paine 1985: 58–59).

Table 1 below summarises the linguistic criteria discussed in sections 3.2.1 to 3.2.8 above, and indicates how the three study guides were assessed in terms of each of the criteria.

Table 1. Linguistic criteria and associated questions for evaluation of study guides

Linguistic criterion	**Questions asked to assess study guide in terms of criterion**
1. Contextualisation markers	Does the text make use of contextualisation markers -to a sufficient degree? -in a way that makes logical relations between different concepts, ideas and statements clear? -in a way that makes the text more reader-friendly and easier to follow? Are contextualisation markers used to a similar degree throughout the study guide or are they missing from substantial sections of the text?
2. Paragraphing	Do paragraph breaks indicate separate units of thought? Do the writer's paragraphs indicate genuine units of thought in the text? Do paragraphs follow a linear thought pattern, i.e., do paragraphs have a topic statement followed by sentences that explain the statement?
3. The use of metatext	Does the writer give guidelines on the organisation of the text? In doing so, does the writer make the content explicit? Are the guidelines clear?
4. Explicitness	Are the main points and important information stated early in the different sections? Is the important information easily identifiable? Does the writer use strong action verbs?
5. Cohesion and coherence	Are there explicit links between ideas in the content of the study guide? Does the text make use of cohesive devices (such as references, substitution, ellipsis, conjunctions and lexical cohesion) to make the links between separate ideas clear/explicit? Are the examples used in the study guide relatively neutral, and how likely is it that the student will be able to relate to them? Do the sections of text in general contain all the pieces of information that are necessary for the student to understand the message?
6. Guiding inferencing	Are the items, sentence constructions and examples in the text appropriate for the level of study (i.e. first-year level)? Specialist terms: -Are the specialist terms essential for the comprehension of new concepts? -Are new terms explained carefully when they are introduced? -Does the writer remind students of the new specialist terms that have been introduced? -Is the number of new terms appropriate for the level of study (i.e. first-year level)? -Does the writer use the newly introduced terms consistently? Is the vocabulary and sentence construction precise?

Linguistic criterion	Questions asked to assess study guide in terms of criterion
7. Interpersonal style	Does the writer interact with the student? Is the writer tentative in his approach? Does the writer sound authoritative but not overassertive? How often does the writer use modality such as modal verbs and modal adverbs (e.g., *may*, *perhaps*)? Does the writer invite the reader to take part in an activity, or does he issue instructions? Does the writer make use of personal references (*I*, *we*, *you*)? Are the personal references unambiguous, i.e., is it clear what the writer is referring to? Does the writer use contractions (e.g. *I'm* instead of *I am*, *don't* instead of *do not*)?
8. Simplicity	Are the sentences short and simple? Does the writer avoid nominalisations and use simple verb forms instead? Are the words simple (generally, three syllables or less)?

3.3 Critical evaluation of study guides

The remainder of this chapter reports on an analysis of three study guides in terms of these linguistic criteria. Note that the three study guides are all used for first-year modules in departments at a single DLI, which means that the target audience for each study guide comes from the same student population.

3.3.1 Study Guide 1

All three study guides discussed here are used for first-year modules offered by the same DLI. Study Guide 1 is used for a module offered by the Faculty of Arts and Culture.

3.3.1.1 Appropriate use of contextualisation markers

In example (1) below the contextualisation marker *however* serves as a link between the two sentences (unless indicated otherwise, any emphasis by means of italics in the examples is my own):

1) You are married to someone who prefers you to stay at home and rear children. You have, *however*, completed your degree.

I found very few such contextualisation markers in this study guide. Although the absence of contextualisation markers does not seem to detract from the coherence of the text in any obvious way, I would presume that it would require more concentration from a student, especially a first-year student, to interpret the various sections of the text as a coherent whole. By not using contextualisation markers, the writer places the responsibility on the (first-year) student to infer the logical relations between different concepts, ideas, statements and sentences. The following are examples from the text that show how the absence of contextualisation markers makes a paragraph seem like a list of unrelated sentences rather than a coherent whole:

2) People often rely on the radio to be their companion owing to their circumstances. Radio stations broadcast programmes in which the public can participate. Radio stations provide opportunity to include all members of the community. South Africans living overseas listen to their favourite radio station via the internet or by means of satellite radio.

3) Louw and Visser's greatest concern was the transmission of messages from communicator to recipient. The clarity of the information is an important issue. Louw and Visser did not consider the content and meaning of the message. Louw and Visser's model is referred to as the technical model.

4) A nonverbal message and a verbal message convey the same meaning. A nonverbal message complements a verbal message. A nonverbal cue can complement verbal communication.

The writer uses rhetorical questions as contextualisation markers effectively, which could stimulate thinking. These rhetorical questions seem to be particularly effective when they are used in the middle of a paragraph. It might be because they provide a welcome break in the large amount of information and facts that the learner is being confronted with, and appeal to the learner to think about what he is reading. The following are examples of rhetorical questions which occur in the middle of a paragraph:

5) People's definitions of communication will differ. Most people say that people communicate when they transfer messages to each other. *Have you ever wondered how people communicate?* There are various explanations for the origin of communication. There are scientific definitions for communication and various characteristics of communication.

6) A sign is the representation of an idea, concept or object. A wink is a symbolic sign at a formal meeting. *Which other meaning can a wink have?* A wink can be a sign that you are flirting with someone. It can also serve as a greeting.

7) Arbitrary signs are used in effective communication exchanges. *What are the most basic arbitrary signs?* The letters of the alphabet are the most arbitrary signs and are used to make up words. These arbitrary signs have to be learnt.

3.3.1.2 Appropriate paragraphing

In Study Guide 1, the writer indicates genuine units of thought by means of separate paragraphs. In some cases, the paragraphs do seem a bit long, but even these long paragraphs indicate what are strictly speaking single units of thought. In most cases, the writer places the main point at the beginning of the paragraph and explains the main point with supporting evidence in the sentences that follow. This is known as the linear style of paragraphing (see sections 2.5.2 and 3.2.2), and represents a deductive style of reasoning, as illustrated by the following examples:

8) *In prehistoric times drawings and pictures of animals and people in cave paintings were used to communicate.* Wedge-shaped strokes on clay tables represented ideas. Sounds were later added to identify pictures.

9) *Electrically powered calculating machines paved the way for computers*. Computers were initially used to perform lengthy calculations, and the personal computer only became a household commodity in the 1980s. Now personal computers have become known as multimedia PCs because various media, such

as videos, CDs, images, telephones and cameras can be integrated to enhance the distribution of information.

10) *Tourism is of particular importance to the country*. All the provinces have tourist attractions. In addition, each province has its own logo. The various logos of the provinces have symbolised different meanings.

3.3.1.3 The use of metatext

In many instances in Study Guide 1 the writer organises the text and guides the student through the text by making use of text reflexivity, i.e., text about text. The following are examples of such metatext:

11) This chapter guides you through the various stages of the communication act.

12) In chapter 7 of the study guide you will find a discussion of the specific communication strategies.

13) In study unit 2 we looked at the development of communication. At the end of the study unit we touched on verbal and nonverbal communication. We will elaborate on these concepts in the next unit.

In some sections, though, the writer's voice becomes silent, and the focus is on the academic content. The following examples do not contain metatext:

14) Scientific study enables one to understand why communication problems occur.

15) Communication is the transmission of a message from a sender to a receiver. Effective communication is important in personal life and the business world.

16) This model makes the communicators both the senders and receivers at the same time. Speakers are engaged in constant communication and the sending and receiving of messages.

3.3.1.4 Explicitness

The writer succeeds in placing the main point in each section early on in the text. For example, in the chapter with the title "The communication process" the writer starts off with an explanation of the term "communication" and the communication process. Then he expands with examples, and elaborates on the term "communication process". The same applies to the chapter that deals with "Language and communication". Immediately, the writer starts writing about language in communication. In the sentences that follow, the writer provides examples and expands on the main point, by providing information on language and thought, and how the relationship between language and thought plays a role in communication.

Also, the writer uses strong, precise, action verbs, for example:

17) *List* at least two words that describe communication.

18) *Compare* the three situations.

19) *Find* three examples of the communicative functions of language.

3.3.1.5 Cohesion and coherence

Each of the three study guides makes adequate use of the cohesive devices referred to by Halliday and Hasan (1976) – it is quite easy to find examples of references, substitution, ellipsis and conjunctions on almost any single page of each study guide, and lexical cohesion occurs quite naturally (almost automatically) due to the fact that the topic covered by a study guide is quite clearly delineated by the module for which it is used. For this reason, I will not refer to these cohesive devices in my judgement of the study guides in terms of cohesion and coherence (i.e. the current section as well as sections 3.3.2.5 and 3.3.3.5), and have instead chosen to focus on the extent to which each study guide, in addition, adheres to Enkvist's (1990) and Kaplan's (1966) suggestions regarding cohesion and coherence. In this regard, the writer of Study Guide 1 strives to produce a coherent text by describing a world view which the student may find familiar – see the following examples used by the writer:

20) Just as a baby grows to adulthood, our communication skills develop through various stages.

21) Printed communication has an effect on both people and society. For example, if your local newspaper places an advertisement on the latest fashion trend in shoes, it could have an effect on the purchasing behaviour of the readers.

22) Film is a powerful communication medium. Films are used to address various aspects, such as fulfilling educational roles, delivering social comments, providing entertainment and illustrating different value systems. Films assist us in understanding the reasons for the existence of differences, prejudices and different perspectives.

Most students would be able to identify with example (20), which should be in the average DLI student's frame of reference. In example (21), the writer builds a plausible world around the statement by using an appropriate example. In example (22), the sentences are short and explicit, and even though there are no overt cohesive links, there is coherence, in other words, the reader can build a plausible world around the text. Also, it contains all the necessary pieces of information to enable the reader to build a plausible world around the text.

In some instances the writer of Study Guide 1 also creates a plausible text world for the reader by first providing a scenario or example and then proceeding to present the facts. In the following, the writer explains the terms "intrapersonal communication" (example 23), nonverbal signs (example 24) and the role of hearing (example 25):

23) Imagine that you win a lotto this week. What is the first thing you would do or consider? Surely you would talk to yourself (intrapersonal communication) and try and think of whom you would see or call to share the news with.

24) This morning when you woke up you had to communicate certain things to the people you came into contact with. Apart from verbal communication you had to use signs. One uses various signs to communicate.

25) Imagine that you wake up after a nightmare. You listen intensely, but you can hear nothing. Suddenly you hear a door slamming. When you hear an unexpected noise after a period of silence, you may be startled.

3.3.1.6 Guiding inferencing

The writer uses relevant examples as far as possible. For example, the writer explains the term "hypothesis" (a testable statement that contains a cause-and-effect relationship) by providing the following relevant example: *If you do not hand in your assignment, then you will not be admitted to the examination*. Also, the writer explains the term "nonverbal communication" by using the example *If you deliberately make eye contact with somebody you are attracted to, it is an example of nonverbal communication.* Further, the writer explains external barriers to communication through the following example: *While you are listening to your lecturer, external barriers may prevent you from listening, such as students screaming outside, your fellow student's cellphone ringing and a window slamming.* At one stage the writer uses a Madam and Eve cartoon to explain the concept of 'verbal communication'. Madam and Eve is a cartoon which first-year students would probably have read in magazines and/or watched on TV, hence it is something they can identify with.

The writer does not use many technical terms but when he does introduce new terms, he does this in a systematic manner. This can be illustrated by the way he introduces two terms: "telecommuting" and "intentional communication". In introducing the term "telecommuting", he gives a synonym *distance working* in brackets. He supplies a definition, noting that "telecommuting refers to the enjoyment of flexibility". He provides some background information: *The first experiments in this field began in 1973. It was only in the 1980s that employees began to work from their "home offices" on desktop computers provided by their employees*. Finally, he also describes a context and/or examples: *Today, telecommuters carry notebooks or laptops and are linked or connected to the office via their company network and other communication channels.*

As another example, in introducing the term "intentional communication" the writer firstly provides a definition ("deliberate attempt to communicate"), then he gives several examples (congratulating a friend, waving at a colleague), and, finally, he contrasts intentional

communication with unintentional communication ("not being aware when you communicate").

3.3.1.7 Interpersonal style

The writer uses an interpersonal tone, sometimes addressing the student directly – see examples (26) to (28) below.

26) The purpose of the activities is to assist *you* with the content.

27) Try to determine the role of television in *your* household.

28) Consider the role that newspapers play in *your* community.

However, the writer does not use the interpersonal style frequently, as there are large sections of the study guide which lack any reference to the reader, i.e. in which the writer does not address the reader at all. In such instances the readers (i.e. the students) may feel anonymous. In addition, this style could be laborious for the reader, and it may cause him to lose concentration. The following are examples of the use of an impersonal style:

29) Successful research warrants that scholars should be familiar with the theory.

30) Emotion can be inferred from nonverbal communication.

31) Nonverbal communication is concerned with messages through body language, gestures, facial expressions, voice and eye behaviour.

The above sentences could be stated in an interpersonal style in the following way:

32) As a student, you should be familiar with this theory in order to be able to conduct successful research.

33) You may be able to determine a person's emotions on the basis of his nonverbal communication.

34) You can communicate messages by means of nonverbal communication, such as your body language, gestures, facial expressions, voice and eye behaviour.

Also, in many instances the writer makes use of the passive voice style which makes the sentence construction more complex and therefore obfuscates the meaning. See the following examples:

35) Printing by the Chinese is done by means of a number of processes of which words and pictures are reproduced on material such as fabric or paper.

36) The assignment must be handed in by you before 27 March 2009.

37) Language is taken for granted by people.

The above sentences are much easier to process in the active voice, as in the following examples:

38) The Chinese print by using a number of processes. During these processes they reproduce pictures on materials such as fabric or paper.

39) You must hand in your assignment before 27 March 2009.

40) People take language for granted.

Throughout the text, the writer modifies his statements. As a result, he does not come across as too assertive. An advantage of this strategy is that the writer's view does not dominate, which allows the reader to evaluate and consider statements made by the writer. The following are examples of modified statements:

41) Your definition will *probably* be something like the one in the example.

42) Your example of verbal communication *may* include a conversation with a friend.

43) This is *perhaps* the most important function of communication.

3.3.1.8 Simplicity

In Study Guide 1, the sentences are generally short, which enables the writer to keep the lexical density of the text quite low. See the following examples:

44) We can therefore say that one of the reasons for the proliferation of definitions is that there is no single approach to communication. Definitions differ according to the theorist's views about communication. In this section we will highlight the various views on communication.

45) Communication takes place in many contexts. We communicate with people that we know well and with people that we are not familiar with. We use many communication strategies to communicate.

46) Married couples separate, friends become estranged, and workers do not cooperate. People grow apart because of misunderstanding. Misunderstanding is brought on by miscommunication.

Even in the absence of contextualisation markers, these simple sentences may aid the students in the inferencing process, helping to bring about a coherent interpretation of the text.

The writer also uses simple words, except when technical terms are necessary (in which case he introduces them in a systematic way, as set out in section 3.3.1.6 above).

3.3.2 Study Guide 2

Study Guide 2 is used for a module offered by the Faculty of Management.

3.3.2.1 Appropriate use of contextualisation markers

The writer of Study Guide 2 makes more use of contextualisation markers than the writer of Study Guide 1. He generally uses contextualisation markers to create overt cohesive links between ideas and concepts in otherwise very long sentences, thereby facilitating the coherent interpretation of the text. This is illustrated by means of the following examples:

47) These large amalgamated local government areas experience great disadvantages from the point of view of local government. *First*, the activities of personnel are more complicated and this leads to confusion. *Second*, it makes the coordinating roles of politicians more difficult. *As a result*, the resident representatives have less influence over the management of local services, and, ultimately, local residents have less input into local government.

48) As politicians, councillors are forever involved in resolving conflict between people. *Because* people have differing views, they have different interests too. *Therefore*, conflicts of interest are common. These conflicts have to be resolved to maintain social order.

49) The chief executive works together with the council with regard to policymaking. *Furthermore*, it is the chief executive's responsibility to identify possible new policies.

3.3.2.2 Appropriate paragraphing

Some paragraphs do not follow an identifiable pattern. The example paragraph that follows contains a number of ideas and it is not made explicit to the reader what the main point is. Furthermore, it is also not clear exactly how the sentences in the paragraph are related to each other:

50) With reference to the phenomenon of planning, Van Wyk points out that we sometimes erroneously think only of physical planning, e.g. planning of a building, street or dam. When we think of comprehensive development,

planning involves much more than just physical planning. Planning is a continuous process which involves decisions or choices, about alternative ways of using available sources, with the aim of achieving particular goals at some time in the future.

However, most paragraphs in the text do follow a linear pattern with the main point stated up front, while the rest of the sentences describe or expand on the idea. The following are examples of such paragraphing:

51) *Once a new local government has been created, it exists on paper only*. The paper creation becomes a local government only once people are included, and this happens by means of elections. After the first election for a new local government, elections must be held at least every five years. However, before elections can be held, the local area must be divided into wards and a voter's roll compiled.

52) *Local government areas are characterised by a heterogeneous population.* Although this population has the same system of local government for a certain area, the citizens represent a variety of unique cultural values, which can differ from one area to the next. This leads to a significant difference in the inputs that the various local governments receive.

53) *Land is a basic ingredient of economic development.* A local government cannot develop economically if there is no land available. However, land for economic development is becoming scarce. As a result, governments must use smaller premises for such development.

3.3.2.3 The use of metatext

In Study Guide 2 there is some evidence of text reflexivity (metatext), which serves to orient the reader to the structure and content of the study guide. In my opinion, metatext is, however, not used adequately throughout the study guide. The following is a (rare) instance where the writer uses metatext:

54) In this chapter, a discussion on local government in South Africa, it is important to explain the most general terms …The aim of this chapter is therefore to define terminological concepts.

3.3.2.4 Explicitness

In most instances, the writer does not start the sections of text with the main idea. For example, in the section titled "Local government structures", he first provides definitions of "local government" and then explains concepts such as 'municipality' and 'democracy' before mentioning the local government structures, which, to my mind, should be mentioned much earlier, given the title of the section. In using this long-winded way to get to the most important information, the main point is not made explicit. Only after four pages does the writer finally get to the most important information.

Similarly, in the section titled "Local government structure in South Africa", the writer first expands on local government patterns, establishment of municipalities, special procedures, general procedures, geographical divisions, politics in local government, the election process, and role-players in voting before he comes to the actual structures in local government, 16 pages later in a section which is 38 pages long.

The writer also does not use explicit action verbs. He uses verbs which are typical of true academic writing, e.g. "Van Rooyen *states* …" and "It *is* due…". He does not give explicit instructions to the reader and does not address the reader directly.

3.3.2.5 Cohesion and coherence

The writer generally uses long sentences, which may hamper the coherent interpretation of a text. When a reader (student) cannot build a consistent world view around a text, the text may be incoherent for him. However, overt links in the text could contribute to its coherent interpretation (see 3.2.5). The following are examples of long sentences which hamper a coherent interpretation of the text and place unnecessary processing demands on the students:

55) If a municipal council is dissolved or does not have enough members to form a quorum for a meeting, the MEC for local government in the province must

appoint one or more administrators to ensure the continued functioning of the municipality until a new municipal council is elected or until the council has sufficient members to form a quorum.

56) An executive mayor is entitled to receive reports from committees of the municipal council and to forward these reports together with a recommendation to the council when the matter cannot be settled by the executive mayor in terms of the executive mayor's delegated powers.

57) Although not all committees have the power to make and implement decisions, this system gives all council members the opportunity to participate in the discussion of the committee matters; as a result, the member has the opportunity to at least hear the preferences of the voters on a certain matter.

In spite of the long sentences, the writer generally avoids the use of the passive voice form, which contributes to the coherence of the text. The following are examples of sentences where the writer uses the active voice form:

58) Local governments with a reasonable number of officials divide their personnel into different departments.

59) Departmental heads play an important role in the personnel function.

60) This law provides criteria and procedures for the determination of municipal boundaries.

3.3.2.6 Guiding inferencing

The writer does not introduce new terms in a systematic or effective way. For example, to introduce the term "democratisation", he simply explains that a democratic state is "a state where the citizens of the state elect all governments in the state". He does not explain the term "democratisation" itself, and he does not explain the link between "democratic state" and "democratisation". In this case, the student has to infer the meaning of the term from a definition of a related term, which could be a daunting task for a first-year student. Also, the

writer defines the term "transformation" as "the change in outward experience or inner character of something" and then he relates it to local government, saying that "transformation of local government is changing one or more of all aspects of local government". However, nowhere else in the study guide does he use the term again.

Furthermore, nowhere does the writer provide examples that the student can relate to; in fact, he rarely provides examples. He just explains terms without relating them to the experiences of the students. For example, he does not even probe the student to think about the local government in his community. Under the heading "Income from local sources", one would expect that he would explain precisely what the heading states. However, in one instance he makes the statement "Most of the ministries of the central government participate in the control function over local government. For example, the Minister of Health will ensure that local government deals with public health matters according to the central government's public health policy." In his example, he introduces additional concepts (such as 'central government' and 'public health policy') which, to my mind, need their own explanation. The writer does not offer an explanation of the term "local sources"; instead, he refers to the situation in Nigeria, and, in the process, uses the word "demarcation" without explaining it. I am sure many first-year students need to consult a dictionary when they encounter the word "demarcation". In this case, the writer places the burden of inferencing on the student.

In most cases, the writer uses specialist vocabulary without explaining it; there are, for example, no definitions of the terms "constitutions", "amenities", "councillor", "resolution", or " statutory control". The following examples illustrate how the writer sometimes uses words and sentences that could have been expressed in simpler terms:

61) In addition to delegation and instruction by Parliament, the Constitution also delegates to the officials.

62) An unrehabilitated insolvent is disqualified from becoming or remaining a member of the board.

63) The demarcation and alteration of boundaries, amalgamation of different areas, and the reduction and extension of the rights of local government are all important matters.

The writer uses terms such as "require" instead of "need", "acquires" instead of "gets", "allocate" instead of "give", and the nominalisation "functional effectiveness" instead of the simple verb "functions". Such unnecessary nominalisation is also used in saying *The participation of voters is essential* instead of *All voters must participate*.

3.3.2.7 Interpersonal style

The writer does not use the interpersonal style often. He does not address the student directly, and he does not start with an orientation or introduction at the beginning of the study guide – he simply proceeds with the content. Upon reading the study guide, one gets the impression that it is a pure academic text, where there is little or no interaction with the reader. The tone is impersonal to such an extent that one forgets that one is reading a study guide. The text is filled with academic information and there is little evidence that it is reader-oriented. The following examples illustrate the general style of Study Guide 2 and how the writer fails to interact with the reader:

64) Like any other sphere of government in South Africa, local government has not been able to escape the impact of transformation.

65) Local government authority lies in its legal ability to create by-laws and to implement them in order to perform its functions.

66) In most countries in the early 19th century, elections for council members of local government were not held.

Later in the text, the writer refers to "we" in "we cannot undertake a comprehensive study". This could be seen as an effort to include the reader, but the use of "we" could be ambiguous, as a first-year student would most likely not be able to deduce whether the writer refers to himself and other academics, or to himself and the student. In this text which is characterised by the absence of writer interaction, the student would probably interpret the sentence as a reference to the writer and other academics, as he may already feel detached from the text owing to the fact that he has not been addressed directly at all up until that point.

In some instances the writer makes limited use of modality and hedging, as illustrated by the examples below:

67) Another structure that *may* be found in the local governments of some countries is a management committee.

68) The implementation of a specific plan *may* be influenced by a number of factors.

69) It is *often* difficult for large organisations and governments to manage the implementation of policies.

In general, however, the writer does not use modality to modify statements and he comes across as very assertive in some instances:

70) The planned road system for a specific local government *will* suffice for the expected road traffic.

71) The implementation of some plans *is* doomed from the start.

72) A council decision *is* useless unless it is implemented.

3.3.2.8 Simplicity

Some of the sentences seem quite long (see the examples below) and also complex (containing embedded clauses), which increases the lexical density of the text. This could have an influence on the coherence of the text, especially if there are a large number of such long sentences.

73) In areas where a large number of interest groups, sometimes with conflicting and overlapping objectives, are active and confuse the community, political parties play an important role in arranging objectives for presentation to the residents and this makes it easier for the residents to make a choice.

74) Although such representatives receive power from the community, which they can impose on the community through persuasion, legislation, and even coercion, it is important to remember that the elected representatives remain responsible and accountable to the electorate for the way in which they use the power received in trust from the community.

The above sentences consist of 47 words and 52 words, respectively. Although the sentences may be easily comprehensible if one breaks them up into smaller parts, the first-year student may have to re-read them before they make sense to him. This is time-consuming and might lead to the student missing or misunderstanding some of the points. This could be avoided by dividing such sentences into a number of shorter, simpler sentences.

3.3.3 Study Guide 3

Study Guide 3 is used for a module offered by the Faculty of Veterinary Science.

3.3.3.1 Appropriate use of contextualisation markers

The use of contextualisation markers in Study Guide 3 is illustrated by the following examples:

75) This course requires you to read your literature and to write assignments. *For this reason*, if you have problems with reading and writing, you should contact us.

76) Dairy cows are very expensive, and farmers would be very angry if a cow is slaughtered that is actually negative for the disease. *Therefore*, if cows in a herd are found to be positive on the screening test, the herd is retested using other tests.

77) You cannot calculate the period prevalence rate as no period is specified in the problem. *However*, the prevalence calculated will be the period prevalence rate as the problem mentions consulting retrospective records, which presumably covered a few months or years.

The function of these contextualisation markers is to show the logical relationship between ideas, sentences, phrases and words. The use of contextualisation markers makes the text easier to follow. In a highly technical subject such as veterinary science it is essential that writers use contextualisation markers to make the text reader friendly and easy to follow.

3.3.3.2 Appropriate paragraphing

In Study Guide 3, the writer indicates separate units of thought clearly by means of breaks between paragraphs. He often follows a linear paragraphing style by placing the main point at the beginning of a paragraph, followed by sentences that explain or expand on the main point. The following are examples of this linear progression:

78) *In many diseases it is hard to tell if the animal or human is sick.* Sometimes people or animals can be sick and not even be positive on tests. For instance, in the early stages of HIV infection, the blood test can be negative for antibodies so that you would think the person has not got the disease.

79) *Toxigenicity is the ability to produce toxins.* However, some toxins excrete other dangerous toxins. These toxins cause bloody conditions such as bloody diarrhoea and kidney failure. If untreated, this could result in death.

80) *Information is of no use if no one acts on it.* This could be very frustrating. Fortunately, the state veterinary services can act almost immediately where necessary.

3.3.3.3 The use of metatext

The writer breaks the monotony of providing facts and information by using text reflexivity to orientate the reader and to give guidelines on the text structure and contents. The writer makes explicit use of text reflexivity. In a highly technical text such as this one, it is important that the writer guides the reader through the organisation of the text so as to break the monotony of the presentation of the facts and to make explicit the content, structure and

organisation of the study guide. The following are examples of the effective use of text reflexivity in this study guide:

81) In the next unit, all the characteristics of the host population will be given in detail.

82) In the previous unit, we briefly defined health and discussed the difficulties involved in identifying diseases. In this unit we will look closely at the transmission of diseases.

83) I will first describe the various routes through which the disease can be transmitted and then I will distinguish between the three ways of transmission.

3.3.3.4 Explicitness

The writer generally places important information early on in the various sections of text. For example, in a section titled "Epidemiological Methods", the writer introduces the methods in the first paragraphs, and then proceeds to deal with each of the various methods, such as monitoring, surveillance and questionnaires. All the sentences that follow expand on the methods. Similarly, in a chapter which deals with the nature, causes and transmission of animal diseases, the writer starts by explaining the concepts referred to in the chapter's title. Then he gives a case history that expands on the nature, causes and transmission of animal diseases. Throughout the chapter, he provides more examples and expands on the topic. In another instance, in a section dealing with the epidemiological triad, the writer first explains what this is, then distinguishes between its three components, and, finally, explains the different factors involved in each of the three components.

3.3.3.5 Cohesion and coherence

The writer attempts to create a plausible text world throughout by providing examples for new concepts and information in the text. This is evidenced by the following examples:

84) The risk of disease in animals is closely related to where they live and their habits. *For example*, rabies occurs mainly in kudu, which are browsers rather

that other types of antelope that are chiefly grazers, in areas where saliva is spread on the branches and thorns of bushes by infected kudu.

85) It is far more difficult to define disease than health. *For instance*, a cow with a positive test for brucellosis may look healthy, yet she can transmit the disease to other cows through her milk.

86) Indirect transmission of disease through mechanical means is very important for AHTs. *For instance*, you can transmit foot-and-mouth disease by driving a car from an area where the disease is present to another.

3.3.3.6 Guiding inferencing

The writer frequently provides examples (although these examples assume that the students have some background knowledge). The student may, or may not, have the background knowledge to which the examples refer – see (87) and (88) below.

87) The risk of disease in animals is closely related to where they live and their habits. For example, rabies occurs mainly in kudu, which are browsers.

88) Many animals with this disease never recover fully. For instance, a cow with a positive serological test for brucellosis must be treated regularly.

In Study Guide 3, the writer also provides definitions and explanations, and then discusses and explains key terms in the definition in order to facilitate a coherent understanding of the text – see examples (89) to (91):

89) Non-infectious diseases are those whose basic agents are *abiotic*. *Abiotic* agents are non-living agents.

90) Veterinarians do an *epidemiological investigation*. An *epidemiological investigation* is a clinical investigation, which is a systematic approach to the observation and recording of clinical signs.

91) The diseases have an *incubation period*. The *incubation period* is the period of time between the initial exposure and the appearance of symptoms.

The writer introduces specialist terms by providing examples and referring to terms which are related or stand in contrast to the term under discussion. For example, when he explains "primary determinants" he gives a definition ("factors which have a major effect in disease"), then provides examples, and, finally, contrasts the term with "secondary determinants". Similarly, when he introduces the term "vertical transmission", he gives a definition ("when the agent moves from the host to the offspring"), then provides examples of such diseases (e.g. blue ticks), and, finally, contrasts the term with "horisontal transmission".

3.3.3.7 Interpersonal style

The whole of Study Guide 3 is characterised by the use of an interpersonal, interactive style. One would expect that the style in a technical, scientific subject would be formal, factual and impersonal, but the writer succeeds in maintaining an interactive, interpersonal style, mostly by making use of a dialogic style, as in the examples below:

92) I recently saw this report in a newspaper. … You may also have seen reports like these.

93) Your practical experience in the workplace will help you to achieve these outcomes.

94) If you did Mathematics at Matric level, the mathematics in this module should not be a problem for you.

Immediately, the writer draws the student into his world by addressing him directly. In the following example, the writer shows that he has insight into the situation of the student, specifically the fact that it is challenging for some students to read academic texts in English.

95) I know that for many of you, English is a second, third or even fourth language. For this reason, you must have a good English dictionary.

Upon reading this, the student may feel that the lecturer understands his situation, which, in turn, leads to a positive experience with the study guide and reinforces trust in the writer as an authority figure.

In the example that follows the writer demonstrates in the first sentence that he identifies with what the student may think; also, he acknowledges the thoughts the student might have on the subject. He first interacts with the student (first sentence) and then states a fact (second sentence). In this way, he appeals to the thoughts and reasoning of the student, before stating a fact. This shows that the writer is reader-oriented.

96) You may think that it is enough just to recognise disease in an animal and be able to prevent that disease. However, in Africa many of the diseases of livestock spread with the rapidity of a veldfire in a high wind, affecting many animals.

The following example provides additional evidence that the writer is reader-oriented, in that he gives the reader the impression that he identifies with his (the reader's) future role:

97) As an AHT (*Animal Health Technician*), you will be involved in active surveillance of diseases.

In the example above, the writer also helps the student to remain goal-oriented, reminding him of the reason why he is studying the course. This is something which students would probably find motivating.

In the examples that follow, and throughout the text, the writer provides chunks of facts, and then relates the information to the student's situation. This serves as a thought break in between the facts, and also serves to break the monotony created by listing a large number of facts.

98) Recently avian influenza has caused disease and deaths in people who have worked with infected chickens. *As an AHT, you have a major role to play* in the prevention of such diseases.

99) The collection and recording of data are important. *You can build the finest and most expensive mansion*, but it will fall down if the foundations are faulty.

100) Clinical signs are effects of disease that can be observed by others, or detected by measuring clinical parameters such as fever and heart rate. Examples of clinical signs that *you, as an AHT, may observe* are the nervous signs associated with heartwater in sheep and bloat due to indigestion.

The writer also frequently refers to himself, as in the examples below, which helps to remind the reader that there is a person behind the text:

101) Below *we* give definitions of some of the important terms.

102) Before *we* move into a more detailed discussion, *we* need to consider some of the important factors that may cause disease.

103) Even *we* were surprised that the diseases had spread.

In the first example above, *we* refers to the writer(s), whereas in the second example, *we* is clearly meant to refer to the writer and the student. Because the writer makes an effort to relate directly to the student, the student is likely to feel that he is included in the writer's *we*, and that he and the writer are working as a team (in contrast to the situation in Study Guide 2 – see, specifically, section 3.3.2.7).

Even though Study Guide 3's subject is an exact science and many facts need to be communicated to the student, the writer still leaves room for some interpretation and judgement by the student. He does not come across as too assertive and varies his level of assertiveness so that it suits the content being discussed: he is assertive when conveying facts to the students but also modifies some of his statements, as shown in the examples below, in order not to come across as too assertive:

104) *Perhaps* the most difficult part was dividing the data into groups.

105) *Probably* the most important thing about the information in the field is that it must be accurate.

106) If you sampled the entire population, you *might* get many more dairy cows than beef cows.

3.3.3.8 Simplicity

Owing to the highly scientific, technical nature of the text, the writer has to use complex words, such as "fluctuations", "epidemic" and "carcasses". The fact that he mostly makes use of short sentences, however, reduces the lexical density of the text and makes inferencing easier. This is illustrated by the examples below:

107) Some of these variables are also linked to each other. For instance, in the case history the climate was linked to the number of Colloids and the age of the horses was linked to their immune status. These sorts of links between variables are known as associations.

108) The vector merely moves the infective material from the infected animal to the host. During the process there is no change in the number or form of the organisms present. A good example of a mechanical vector is the common housefly.

109) It is obvious that poor housing provides opportunities for disease. Good management and husbandry also provide optimal nutrition of animals and promote the welfare of animals. Fencing and paddocks can also prevent contact between carrier animals and susceptible hosts.

3.4 Conclusion

Before comparing the three study guides to each other, I will briefly summarise the main results of the analysis of each study guide.

In Study Guide 1 the writer mainly uses the interpersonal, interactive style. In some instances he uses the passive voice, which hampers the coherent interpretation of the text. The writer modifies his statements throughout the text through the use of modal verbs and adverbs, which allows the reader to reflect on and evaluate some of the facts. However, in a few instances the writer comes across as overassertive, which gives the impression that he is less reader-oriented. Even though the writer does not use contextualisation markers and cohesive links between sentences and ideas extensively, he creates coherence by keeping sentences simple and short, and providing examples that serve to build a plausible text world for the students. In addition, he structures his paragraphs according to the linear style and uses the deductive style of reasoning by placing the main point at the beginning of the paragraph and explaining it by means of the sentences that follow. He also introduces new terms in a systematic manner, and explains new information by sketching scenarios and providing relevant examples. Finally, the writer makes use of text reflexivity to guide the student through the text.

In Study Guide 2, the writer does not often use an interpersonal style. By not addressing the reader (student) directly, the writer gives the impression that the text is purely an academic text. Text reflexivity is used inadequately. In some instances the paragraphing is confusing, but in most instances the writer follows a linear pattern by using deductive reasoning. The frequent occurrence of long sentences increases the lexical density of the text. In this study guide, the writer does, however, avoid the use of the passive voice and he uses contextualisation markers quite often, both of which could lead to a more coherent interpretation of the text. Unfortunately, the writer comes across as overassertive in many instances, owing to the lack of modality markers and hedging.

Study Guide 3 is characterised by an interpersonal, interactive style. Even though the content is of a scientific and technical nature, the writer uses the dialogic style effectively. This writer also includes the reader and shows that he is reader-oriented. The writer effectively shifts between the factual presentation of information and the use of the dialogic style through which he addresses the student directly. This breaks the monotony, and gives the student an opportunity to reflect on, absorb or apply the information. The writer provides definitions, and then lifts key points out of the definition and discusses them. He also adds to coherence by providing relevant, appropriate examples. The writer uses text reflexivity to guide the

reader through the text. He makes use of the linear style of paragraphing. Where possible, the writer also modifies his statements by using modal verbs and adverbs.

Table 2 provides a summary of the judgements made for each study guide in terms of each linguistic criterion. Each judgement is presented as an option on a Likert scale: good - adequate - inadequate - poor.

Table 2. Summary of evaluation of three study guides in terms of each of the linguistic criteria

Linguistic criterion	Study Guide 1	Study Guide 2	Study Guide 3
1.Appropriate use of contextualisation markers	Poor (0)	Adequate (2)	Adequate (2)
2.Appropriate paragraphing	Good (3)	Adequate (2)	Good (3)
3.The use of metatext	Adequate (2)	Inadequate (1)	Good (3)
4.Explicitness	Good (3)	Poor (0)	Good (3)
5.Cohesion and coherence	Adequate (2)	Adequate (2)	Adequate (2)
6.Guiding inferencing	Good (3)	Poor (0)	Adequate (2)
7.Interpersonal style	Adequate (2)	Poor (0)	Good (3)
8.Simplicity	Good (3)	Poor (0)	Adequate (2)
OVERALL SCORE /24	18	7	20

* Overall score obtained by using the following scoring system: poor = 0; inadequate = 1; adequate = 2; good = 3.

The options on any Likert scale are inevitably arbitrary, to a greater or lesser degree. However, making use of such a scale, allows one to at least get an indication of the extent to which each study guide meets the criteria for effective writing/teaching, and allows one to

compare the study guides to each other. From the summary in the table, it is clear that Study Guide 2 ranks lowest in terms of effective writing/teaching (overall score 7/24), while Study Guide 3 ranks highest (overall score 20/24). Study Guide 2 (overall score 18/24) receives the ratings "poor" and "inadequate" for five of the eight criteria (four "poor" ratings and one "inadequate" rating), whereas Study Guide 3 receives the ratings "good" and "adequate" for all eight criteria (four "adequate" and four "good"). Study Guide 1 receives the rating "adequate" for three criteria, the rating "good" for an additional four criteria, and the rating "poor" for only one criterion, namely "appropriate use of contextualisation markers". From this it follows that both Study Guide 1 and Study Guide 3 exemplify effective writing/teaching.

In this chapter, I introduced a list of linguistic criteria for effective study guides and I reported on a critical evaluation of three study guides in terms of these linguistic criteria. Chapter 4 provides some conclusions, suggestions for future research and a discussion of the practical implications of the findings of this thesis.

CHAPTER 4
CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

In the research conducted for this thesis I identified eight linguistic criteria for effective study guides, namely: appropriate use of contextualisation markers; appropriate paragraphing; the use of metatext; explicitness; cohesion and coherence; guiding inferencing; interpersonal style; and simplicity. These criteria were extracted from literature on effective writing/teaching in general, then discussed in terms of their relevance for the specific purpose of writing effective study guides, and finally applied to critically evaluate the language used in three DLI study guides. In this chapter I will offer some concluding remarks (section 4.1), a discussion of the implications of the findings of my research (section 4.2), and some recommendations for further research (section 4.3).

4.1 Concluding remarks

In my opinion, the research reported in this thesis has two main limitations. Firstly, the three study guides that were evaluated were selected in a rather arbitrary way, based on which study guides were readily available to me and which lecturers agreed that I could examine their study guides for my research. It might have been more informative to compare two or three study guides used for modules offered by the same faculty or even for modules that form part of a single subject, as this would have made the study guides more comparable. Secondly, the way in which the study guides were evaluated in terms of the linguistic criteria could be made more systematic by deciding exactly *how* to evaluate a study guide on each criterion. For example, if a writer sometimes makes use of contextualisation markers and sometimes not, how does one evaluate the study guide in terms of "appropriate use of contextualisation markers"? Frequency counts converted into percentages might allow one to make a more informed judgement of a study guide in terms of each criterion. In addition, it is very likely that the eight linguistic criteria do not contribute equally to how effective (the language used in) a study guide is, that some of the criteria are more important than others and that the criteria should thus be weighted differently in an overall judgement of a study guide.

I would like to emphasise, though, that my evaluations of the three study guides are not based solely on the two or three examples provided for each linguistic criterion in sections 3.3.1,

3.3.2 and 3.3.3; instead the examples that are provided were chosen as representative of the study guide's language use in general, and I believe that my judgement of the study guides for each criterion was an informed judgement, based on experience gained by having worked at the DLI referred to in this thesis for eight years in the capacity of language coordinator for study material. Furthermore, although the scope of this thesis is limited, I did achieve the aim of this study by managing to provide a response to the research question stated in chapter 1 as "What are the linguistic criteria for a successful study guide for DLI students who are L2 speakers of English?" In the section below, I will show how my response to this question (in terms of the eight linguistic criteria listed at the beginning of this chapter) could be a valuable resource for writers of DLI study guides.

4.2 Implications of research findings

I believe that the results of the research reported in this thesis can be of practical use to writers of study guides. In light of the research results, I have the following three general recommendations with regard to study guide writing:

a. Writers must learn to be more reader-oriented, i.e. writers should strive to keep the reader in mind when they communicate in writing. For this reason it is also advisable that writers be made aware of the main characteristics of the students for whom they are writing (in terms of, for example, educational background, age and language proficiency).

b. Writers should keep the linguistic criteria for effective study guides in mind while writing study guides as well as other types of written communication with their students (e.g. tutorial letters).

c. Staff development departments in universities should offer writing courses for their lecturers where these linguistic criteria can be introduced and practised.

In view of recommendation (b) above, I have set up a list of 25 "do's" and "don'ts", which can be used by study guide writers as a type of checklist:

(1) Use contextualisation markers to show logical relations between ideas and sentences, to introduce content, to change the topic, to summarise a chunk of content, to emphasise certain sections and ideas, to link different pieces of information, to stimulate the student through the use of rhetorical questions, and to connect sections of related information.

(2) Make the thought structure visual to students by indicating separate units of thought by means of appropriate paragraphing.

(3) Ensure that paragraphs follow a linear thought pattern by stating the main point first, followed by examples and illustrations to explain the main point.

(4) Ensure that the paragraphs are not too long or too short; in other words, use thought breaks appropriately.

(5) Use text about text to organise the text and to provide guidelines to the student about the structure of the text. However, take care not to come across as patronising.

(6) Let the students "hear" your voice.

(7) State the main point and important information explicitly early on in the text, especially when writing for a heterogeneous group.

(8) Use strong action words such as *notice*, *reflect* and *write* to increase the explicitness of the information you wish to communicate.

(9) Avoid the use of the passive form as this makes the content less explicit.

(10) Create explicit links between ideas in the content of the study guide by means of cohesive devices such as references, substitution, ellipsis, conjunctions and lexical cohesion.

(11) Provide examples that all, or at least most, of the students in the target audience can relate to.

(12) Ensure that the text contains all and only those pieces of information that are necessary for the relevant message to be conveyed.

(13) Obtain information on the target audience (in this case including, for example, information on the learners' ages, educational backgrounds, L1s, levels of L2 English proficiency, and literacy skills) before you start writing. Remind yourself of this information throughout.

(14) Introduce specialist terms in a systematic way. First, specialist terms should only be used when they are essential for the students' comprehension of new concepts. Second, a term should be explained very carefully when it is used for the first time, i.e. giving the purpose, definition and examples of the concept. Third, reminders should be given at certain points, e.g. when the term is used again. Fourth, the number of technical terms in a paragraph should be limited. Fifth, alternative technical terms for the same concept should not be used. Finally, once a technical term is introduced, the writer should not revert to the original (non-technical) term.

(15) Use precise words and avoid words that are general, abstract or vague.

(16) Use the correct tone. Strike a balance between assertiveness and accessibility.

(17) Use the dialogic style; write a conversation-in-print.

(18) If you do not want to offend your reader, underplay your assertiveness at times by using modal verbs and adverbs; leave room for tentativeness.

(19) Interact with the students.

(20) Use contractions.

(21) Ensure that your use of personal pronouns is unambiguous.

(22) Invite your readers; do not instruct them.

(23) Keep vocabulary and sentence constructions simple while at the same time stimulating students and maintaining their interest.

(24) Use a "light touch" by being serious but not solemn, and by being precise, particular and penetrating but not pedantic.

(25) Make conscious decisions about which syntactic structures to use. Although the length of sentences should vary within a text, sentences should in general be kept relatively short and follow a simple pattern.

4.3 Further research

The limited scope of this thesis did not allow me to analyse more than three study guides. Analysing more than three study guides and comparing study guides used within the same faculty/department, might allow one to rank the linguistic criteria according to their importance relative to each other, and to identify additional linguistic criteria.

Furthermore, I could have triangulated this research by doing a survey with students to assess which study guides they prefer in order to determine which linguistic criteria are critical from a student's perspective. Feedback from students would allow one to assess how they experienced the study guide. It would also be useful to compare the marks achieved for different courses offered as part of the same degree, in order to determine what the relationship is between (i) the extent to which a study guide adheres to the linguistic criteria identified here, (ii) how the study guide is perceived and experienced by the students, and (iii) what marks students receive for a particular assignment or exam based on the study guide.

It should be noted that, due to practical reasons, it was not possible for me to collect the feedback from students for the purposes of this research. In this regard, I would like to get such feedback in follow-up research.

Avenues for further research include:

a. Assessing whether the presence or absence of the mentioned linguistic criteria, as a group or individually, makes a difference in the student's comprehension of the content or not.
b. Assessing how essential the identified linguistic criteria are for study material for second-year, third-year, and postgraduate students.
c. Assessing the effectiveness of the identified linguistic criteria in other genres, e.g. academic articles and textbooks.
d. A comparison of the writing strategies of lecturers who are L1 speakers of English with the writing strategies of lecturers who are L2 speakers of English.

The research reported in this thesis contributes, if only in a small way, to our understanding of what is involved in writing an effective study guide for a DLI. This is valuable in light of the central role that the study guide plays at DLIs and the important role that DLIs play in the South African context, especially in allowing people to attend a tertiary academic institution in cases where it would not have been possible for them to receive tertiary education through a residential university.

REFERENCES

Ailon, G. 2008. Mirror, mirror on the wall: Culture's consequences in a value test of its own design. *The Academy of Management Review* 33(4): 885–904.

Akinsolu, A.O. 2005. Distance education and socio-cultural practices: planners' perspectives. *Progressio* 27(1 & 2): 62–71.

Atkinson, D. 2004. Contrasting rhetorics / Contrasting cultures: why contrastive rhetoric needs a better conceptualization of culture. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes* 3: 277–289.

Baskerville, R.F. 2003. Hofstede never studied culture. *Accounting, Organizations and Society* 28: 1–14.

Berlin, B. and P. Kay. 1969. *Basic Color Terms: Their Universality and Evolution*. Berkeley: University of California press.

Chick, K. 1989. Intercultural miscommunication as a source of friction in the workplace and in educational settings in South Africa. In García and Otheguy (eds). 1989. *English across cultures and cultures across English*: 139–160. Berlin/New York: Mouton de Gruyter.

Chomsky, N. 1955. The logical structure of linguistic theory. Ms., Harvard University and Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge. [Revised 1956 manuscript published in part as *The Logical Structure of Linguistic Theory* by New York, NY: Plenum, 1975; Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1985.]

Chomsky, N. 1957. *Syntactic Structures*. The Hague: Mouton.

Chomsky, N. 1964. *Current Issues in Linguistic Theory*. The Hague: Mouton.

Chomsky, N. 1986. *Knowledge of Language: Its Nature, Origin and Use*. New York, NY: Praeger.

Connor, U. 1996. *Contrastive rhetoric: cross-cultural aspects of second-language writing*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Connor, U. 2004. Intercultural rhetoric research: beyond texts. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes* 3: 291–304.

Duszak, A. 1997. Cross-cultural academic communication: a discourse-community view. In A. Duszak (ed). 1997. *Trends in Linguistics: Studies and Monographs 104*: 11–40. Berlin/New York: Mouton de Gruyter.

Ellis, R. and C. Hopkins. 1985. *How to succeed in written work and study*. London: Collins.

Enkvist, N.E. 1990. Seven problems in the study of coherence and interpretability. In U. Connor and A.M. Johns (eds). 1990. *Coherence in writing: research and pedagogical perspectives*: 9–28. Alexandria: Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, Inc.

Erben, T and S. Fagan. 1995. Being an non-English speaking background (NESB) student and distance education. Understanding a process of in- and exclusion. In *Distance education: crossing frontiers: Proceedings of the 12th Biennial forum of the Open and Distance Learning Association of Australia*: 57–59. Vanuatu: Central Queensland University.

George, R. 1994. *Language in open and distance education*. A study guide for the University of South Australia's and Deakin University's Master of Distance Education course.

Goddard, C. 2003. Whorf meets Wierzbicka: Variation and universals in language and thinking. *Language Sciences* 25: 393–432.

Gumperz, J. and S. Levinson. 1996. *Rethinking linguistic relativity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Halliday, M.A.K. 1973. *Explorations in the functions of language*. London: Arnold.

Halliday, M.A.K. 1988. On the language of physical science. In M. Ghadessy (ed). 1988. *Registers of written English*: 162–178. London: Pinter.

Halliday, M.A.K. and R. Hasan. 1976. *Cohesion in English.* London: Longman.

Halliday, M.A.K. and R. Hasan. 1989. *Language, Context, and Text: Aspects of language in a social-semiotic perspective.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Haque, A.K.E. 1995. Challenges of distance education in developing countries. In *Distance education: crossing frontiers: Proceedings of the 12th Biennial forum of the Open and Distance Learning Association of Australia*: 63–64. Vanuatu: Central Queensland University.

He, A.W. 2003. Discourse analysis. In M. Aronoff and J. Rees-Miller (eds). *The handbook of linguistics*: 427–445. Oxford: Blackwell.

Heese, M. 2005. The effects of editing print-based study materials on accessibility: a pilot study. *Progressio* 27 (1 & 2): 24–35.

Hinds, J. 1990. Expository writing in Japanese, Korean, Chinese, and Thai. In U. Connor and A.M. Johns (eds). 1990. *Coherence in Writing: Research and Pedagogical Perspectives*. Alexandria: Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, Inc.

Hoey, M. 1991. *Patterns of Lexis in Text*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Hofstede, G. 1986. Cultural differences in teaching and learning. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 10 (2): 301–320.

Hofstede, G. 2001. *Culture's consequences: comparing values, behaviors, institutions, and organizations across nations.* Second edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Holliday, A.R. 1994. *Appropriate methodology in social context*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Johns, A.M. 1990. Coherence as a cultural phenomenon: employing ethnographic principles in the academic milieu. In U. Connor and A.M. Johns (eds). 1990. *Coherence in writing: research and pedagogical perspectives*. Alexandria: Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, Inc.

Jung, E.H. 2006. Misunderstanding of academic monologues by non-native speakers of English. *Journal of Pragmatics* 38: 1929–1942.

Kaplan, R.B. 1966. Cultural thought patterns in intercultural education. *Language Learning* 16: 1–20.

Kaschula, R. and C. Anthonissen. 1995. *Communicating across cultures in South Africa.* Johannesburg: Hodder & Stoughton.

Kember, D. 1991. *Writing study guides*. Bristol: Technical and Educational Services Ltd.

Kreutz, H. and A. Harres. 1997. Some observations on the distribution and function of hedging in German and English academic writing. In A. Duszak (ed). 1997. *Trends in Linguistics: Studies and Monographs 104*: 181–202. Berlin/New York: Mouton de Gruyter.

Lenneberg, E. 1953. Cognition in Ethnolinguistics. *Language* 29(4): 463–471.

Lewis, R and N. Paine. 1985. *How to communicate with the learner*. Huddersfield: H. Charlesworth & Co Ltd.

Mandell, A. and L. Herman. 1996. From teachers to mentors: acknowledging openings in the faculty role. In R. Mills and A. Tait (eds). *Supporting the learner in open and distance learning*. London: Pitman Publishing

Mauranen, A. 1993. *Cultural differences in academic rhetoric: a textlinguistic study*. Frankfort am Main: Peter Lang.

McSweeney, B. 2002. Hofstede's model of national cultural differences and their consequences: A triumph of faith - a failure of analysis. *Human Relations* 55(1): 89–118.

Mehan, H. 1980. The competent student. *Anthropology and Education Quarterly* 11(3): 131–151.

Mehrotra, C.M., C.D. Hollister and L. McGahey. 2001. *Distance learning: principles for effective design, delivery, and evaluation*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications

Nunez, A. and S. Cuccaro-Alamin. 1998. First-generation students: undergraduates whose parents never enrolled in postsecondary education. *Statistical analysis report.* Berkeley: National Center for Education Statistics.

Ozuru, Y., K. Dempsey and D.S. McNamara. 2009. Prior knowledge, reading skill, and text cohesion in the comprehension of science texts. *Learning and Instruction* 19: 228–242.

Paraide, P. 1995. Discourse analysis of selected & elaborated course material texts. In *Distance education: crossing frontiers: Proceedings of the 12th Biennial forum of the Open and Distance Learning Association of Australia*: 97–104. Vanuatu: Central Queensland University.

Pinker, S. 1994. *The language instinct: How the mind creates language*. Perennial.

Qakisa-Makoe, M. 2005. Reaching out: supporting black learners in distance education. *Progressio* 27(1 & 2): 44–61.

Reed, Y. 2001. Language choices in the writing of distance learning materials: how do we write our readers and ourselves? *Southern African Linguistics and Applied Language Studies* 19: 57–65.

Rowntree, D. 1981. *Developing courses for students*. Maidenhead/Berkshire: McGraw-Hill.

Rowntree, D. 1990. *Teaching through self-instruction*. London: Kogan.

Rowntree, D. 1992. *Exploring open and distance learning*. London: Kogan Page.

SA: Pandor: Teaching and Learning Colloquium. 2008. Polity. Downloaded from http://www.polity.org.za/print-version/sa-pandor-teaching-and-learning-colloquium-1 on 2 September 2008.

Sapir, E. 1983. D.G. Mandelbaum. (ed.) *Selected Writings of Edward Sapir in Language, Culture, and Personality*. CA: University of California Press.

Seleetse, S.M. 2002. Review of distance education in South Africa. *Malaysian Journal of Distance Education* 4(1): 87–106.

Sonnekus, I.P., W. Louw and H. Wilson. 2006. Emergent learner support at University of South Africa: an informal report. *Progressio* 28(1 & 2): 44–53.

Subotzky, G. 2008. *Update briefing: 2008 Registrations, 2007 HEMIS Enrolments, Success & Throughput Rates*. University of South Africa. Downloaded from http://heda.unisa.ac.za/heda/fsMain.htm on 9 April 2009.

Strevens, P. English as an international language. *English Teaching Forum* 25(4): 56–63.

Subbiondo, J.L. 2005. Benjamin Lee Whorf's theory of language, culture, and consciousness: A critique of Western science. *Language and Communication* 25: 149–159.

Swales, J. 1990. *Genre analysis: English in academic and research settings*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Ventola, E. 1996. Packing and unpacking of information in academic texts. In E. Ventola and A. Mauranen (eds). *Academic writing: intercultural and textual issues*: 153–194. Amsterdam: John Benjamin's Publishing Company.

Ventola, E. 1997. Modalization: Probability – an exploration into its role in academic writing. In A. Duszak, A. (ed). *Trends in Linguistics: Studies and Monographs 104*: 157–180. Berlin/New York: Mouton de Gruyter.

Whorf, B. 1956. John B. Carroll (ed.) *Language, Thought, and Reality: Selected Writings of Benjamin Lee Whorf*. Mass.: MIT Press.

Wierzbicka, A. 1993. *Semantics, Culture and Cognition.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Wierzbicka, A. 1996. *Semantics, Primes and Universals.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Xing, M., J. Wang and K. Spencer. 2008. Raising students' awareness of cross-cultural contrastive rhetoric in English writing via an E-learning course. *Language Learning & Technology* 12(2): 71–93.